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MELCHIOR GORLES.

VOL. II.

MELCHIOR GORLES.

A Tale

OF MODERN MESMERISM.

BY

HENRY AITCHENBIE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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MELCHIOR GORLES.

CHAPTER I.

THE COLONEL SENDS HIS COMPLIMENTS, AND REGRETS.

In the same house in which De Lyons lived, there just then happened to be vacant a snug little pair of furnished rooms upon the ground floor, opening into a jolly little garden; and as I found the rent was very moderate, and I certainly might have had to go a good deal further and fared much worse, I decided upon there settling myself for the time; so sent and rescued my portmanteaus and household gods from the clutches of the Frau Slanngärtz, not without some demur, however, on the part of that injured dame; as I heard from Stilskins, who went for them, that having made sure of my being incarcerated for probably some months to come, she had quite settled that all my property must become hers, if not by legal confiscation, at any rate for their own value, which must accrue to her for warehousing them all the length of time, to which she looked forward as elapsing, before I should be at liberty again to go and claim them.

However, my faithful messenger, I suppose, convinced her of the futility of her views, and brought away all my goods and chattels triumphantly: so I shook down into my new place in a day or two, and finding myself pretty comfortably established, gave myself up to an inert feeling of languor, which I had never remembered before experiencing,—a kind of vacant longing for repose, the natural reaction, which perhaps I was bound to expect and go through after all my late excitement, and as I may almost call them, adventures.

In spite of my friend De Lyons' rattling company, for he was always rushing in and out of my room at all hours, with every sort of kind intention of rallying or serving me in any way in his power, I somehow felt myself daily falling into a more depressed and morbid state of listlessness, awaking late every morning with most awful *active*, not *passive* headaches (if you are unfortunate enough to know the difference), and they, by the way, were about all that was left active about me, for, quite contrary to my usual habits and inclinations, I didn't care to stir out, or to take up with any of my old pursuits, either rowing or at the fencing school.

Reading at home, even novels, which many fellows can set to work at when they are seedy, was never much in my line; my head wouldn't stand it at all. I

did not seem to care for anything I had to eat; in short, I was all nohow and out of sorts altogether.

I felt bothered and anxious to know what had become of the De Lormes. Well, the Colonel and my aunt, I mean; or if you must snigger in that foolish way you have, I may as well own that, I kept wondering from morning to night, and so on again through my blunder-about dreams till next morning again, how things had turned out with poor Katie, and what state she was in after all she had gone through.

When I looked back to all that had happened, though, as you may see, not much more than ten days or a fortnight had altogether elapsed since I had been in such happiness and enjoyment, and since that fatal walk to the Wolfshügel had taken place, it really seemed to my mind like whole months, I might say, as if a year, at least, had elapsed. Cast down and unhappy as I was, I could not help appreciating the real kindness of *Taraxacum,* who though such a queer animal, certainly did his best in his own way to cheer me up and arouse me. He was constantly, amongst other means for regaining my lost health and spirits, urging me strongly to allow him to bring in and introduce to me his friend the Professor, whom he confidently pronounced to be quite, independently of his scientific and spiritual talents and capabilities, out and

out the cleverest physician in that capital, particularly in cases like mine, which he, and there I myself think he was right, attributed much more to mental than bodily causes. But I did not feel that I required the advice of any doctor, however talented, and was not at all in the humour for making any new acquaintances, or in fact doing anything, or seeing anybody.

I thus went on for some days, growing, I think, rather worse than better, when one morning, or rather noon, though I was not yet turned up out of my bed, *Taraxacum* came bouncing into my room in a high state of excitement. A warm friend he was, indeed, but a very noisy one, impetuous, or I should say impulsive, in every feeling and movement.

He held a whole budget of letters in his hand, which he flung in a shower on my quilt.

"Here you are, old fellow!" he cried, "here is some medicine of the right sort for you at last, and I hope and expect it will agree with you.

"I happened to be stepping up the *Strasse* in which were your old diggings, when, just as I passed the very door, thinking about you as I was, and wishing I could hit on some way to perk you up a bit, I happened to see the postman stop, and grubbing in that little black box which he wears stuck on to his stomach, produce a letter, which he offered to that bottle-nosed

old cod-fish Slanngärtz, your late landlord, who was lounging at the door-post, warming himself in the morning sun.

"I noticed him study the direction of the letter thus offered to him slowly through, shake his head, and then return it to the man's box.

"The real fact then first occurred to me at the moment. I stepped up exactly in time to hear him take your name in vain, and tell the postman that he didn't know where you were, only that you had left his lodgings, and, as far as he believed, Dresden without paying him or any of your bills; on hearing which, I just caught the old rascal a rattling crack on his bottle nose for his gratuitous lie, and before he had recovered either his surprise or his equilibrium, I followed the postman down the street to make further enquiries. From him I learnt that no end of letters addressed to you had, day after day, been repudiated by your old landlady or the slavey, and that, if I liked to go to the bureau, I should find a whole handful waiting for you there; and, behold, if the lips of that worthy, though humble servant of an ill-regulated government have not in this instance uttered the gracious words of truth! So now, let us see if any among this lot will do you any good, and revive you a little.

"Perhaps there might be one."

As I sorted them like a hand at whist I saw there were two or three from home, which I dutifully opened and skimmed through first. The latest by date from my dear old father, advising me of a remittance, and also that he had, as I requested him, paid the sum I had named into Coutts's to Mr. Gorles's account.

"So that fellow is turned up again, is he?" he wrote, "and, I suppose, by your borrowing money when you found yourself run into the corner, whatever it was, to which you allude, you and he must be on better terms than you used to be at Eton. And so you found the De Lormes had left too, at a moment's notice? Old George was always one of the best fellows breathing, but that was a regular habit of his, suddenly taking it into his head to start off here, there, or anywhere for a change, at the whim of the instant. When you next write let your mother know where they have pitched their tent for the present, until his wandering spirit shall have urged him to be off again," and so on.

There were eight or nine business or promiscuous correspondence, but the trump card I had shuffled to the bottom and bottled till the last.

It took my breath away; I had recognised the crest on the seal at once, a five-branched elm tree, *proper*, over the initials G. D. L., and the postmark, to which

I eagerly turned, was stamped Innsbruck. They had gone southwards, then, through the Tyrol.

Taraxacum stood at the foot of my bed, watching me, and he nodded his head with a wink full of meaning and approval when I took up that last letter. It was really too absurd why *I* should feel as if I did not dare open it, though I was all the time longing to know its contents.

"I wonder what it will say inside?" I remarked. "I would give anything to know."

"My friend the Professor would, if you liked, bring you a lad here who could read every word of it for you out of the back of his head, and without breaking the seal," said *Taraxacum*, quite seriously; "though I cannot help thinking," he added, rather sententiously, "that it might be an easier and simpler process if you were only to refer to the inside yourself, instead of trying to sniffle the sense out of the unbroken seal and postmarks. But I see how nervous you are, my dear fellow, while I am watching you, so I shall just take myself off and leave you to enjoy it all alone.

He was right, I was awfully nervous. I got out of bed and locked the door before I had the courage to begin. I quite remember feeling that unless the usual laws of creation had not unluckily been against me, I should like to have been in total darkness when I read it.

To the Professor probably, according to *Taraxacum*, there would not have been the slightest difficulty in such an arrangement.

"Oestreichen Hof, Innsbruck.

"My dear Frank,

"I sit down to write to you; it is my duty to do so without longer delay, though I find it a very difficult task. I am conscious of a violent struggle between many various feelings all working within me at once; gratitude, deep and sincere; regret, sympathy for your own bitter disappointment, and, believe me, my dearest boy, an earnest friendship and affection for yourself. But to begin with my gratitude: all that I, as a father, rescued from the deepest misery and mourning, would try to convey to you, no pen, no words could ever be found sufficient to express. Regret and sorrow I cannot help feeling when I call to mind my own violence and unkindness, and for unjustly accusing you, and refusing to listen to you when you spoke of causes and strange secrets of nature, in regard to which even now, I know not what, or what not, to believe; yet not the less do I feel bound to apologize and heartily beg your forgiveness. I only wish that you could forgive me, in the good old English way of shaking hands, and that circumstances could have allowed me personally

to give you assurances of all I feel towards you ; but no : dear Frank, for your own sake as well as that of my darling child, even doubly dear since thus restored to me, we,—or at least as long as Katie is alive or with me, must never meet again ; it is the only bitter chance of future happiness for you both. Is it not, then, for the best to resign ourselves to a stern necessity at once ? I felt so strongly, that after all that your aunt and I, and darling Katie owed you, that if we had again allowed a meeting at even a single interview, which you, no doubt, had every right to expect, we, by yielding to our natural inclinations of affection, might have been induced to concede to what we should have only had bitterly to repent of for the rest of our lives, and that our only course was to get away at once and for ever. Your aunt informs me that she told you enough of the family secret, I mean the fearful curse hanging, as by a thread, over poor Katie's head, to let you judge for yourself, that though hard to bear, it is for her happiness as well as your own, that you should never meet again. Do not, I implore you, think of, or attempt to follow us, nor at any future time, or under any circumstances, ever even hope to break through this positive, because necessary interdict. Far be it from me, in my present state of kindly feelings to you, to wish to threaten or dictate, but be

assured that any such attempt must, from the steps I should in such a case feel myself justified in taking, end in failure and great trouble, if not disgrace to yourself. No, Frank, I will not think it of you; but if you will take an old stager's advice, start off also somewhere; do not stay brooding over old thoughts and associations at Dresden. If not inclined yet to go back home to England, try change of scene, constant change with some cheery young fellow of your own age for a companion, whom you may easily find. Europe is surely big enough for us both.

"And now before I conclude I must give you the last accounts, for which I know how anxious you will be, of my poor child. We sincerely hope that by perfect rest and quiet amidst this lovely scenery, to which we have succeeded in moving her down by easy stages, she really may, and indeed is recovering her health and spirits, both of which, as you may well imagine, have been in a most critical state from the reaction which was to be expected after all she had been through. Of the extreme state she was really in, and how far we had every reason to believe her lost to us for ever, we do not think she is herself fully aware: from herself we have had no description of what her own feelings may have been; indeed she seems to avoid speaking of, or in any way alluding to

them. Katie has more than once earnestly expressed a wish herself to write to you her thanks for all that she feels she owes to you; but though, believe me, it grieved us much to refuse her, on what she evidently had so strongly set her heart, we thought it better for you both, from the first to be firm in our refusal; indeed, in her present weak state, all mental exertion must be forbidden, even reading to herself; and except one letter which she has been allowed to send to her brother, to console the poor boy for being left so suddenly as he was at his school, all correspondence is entirely interdicted. Have you seen anything of our Ferdy since we left? if so, we know that you will be kind to him. And, now, my dear boy, I must close this very long, and, I fear, rambling letter; in which, long as it is, I feel that I have not said one tenth of all that I have, or ought to say. But once again, with every expression of gratitude, love, and affectionate good wishes for your welfare through life, in which I am joined by your aunt, and if I told her to whom I was now writing, should, I well know, by Katie also,

"Believe me, ever, my dearest Frank,

"Your most affectionate and grateful uncle,

"GEORGE DELAWARR DE LORME."

"And a great deal of use all such heaps of professions of gratitude and affection are likely to be to me," I said to myself, with a bitter feeling in my heart, and an inward groan, "when the only one thing I should be likely to wish, or ask for in return for having been the chance instrument, as I was, for restoring her to them alive, he starts by pointing out to be impossible.

"Confound all such palaver, and humbug!" I ejaculated, as I plunged my head into my washing basin, and set to work to get myself dressed and ready to go out, as fast as I could.

CHAPTER II.

"WHAT IS SAUCE FOR THE GOOSE IS SAUCE FOR THE GANDER."

SANCHO PANZA.

I HAD so entirely given up even stirring out of my rooms for some days past, that when *Taraxacum* met me at the foot of the stairs down from his own regions, he seemed quite pleased, and congratulated me upon that symptom at least of physical improvement; and took advantage of the opportunity to ask me whether I would mind meeting his particular friend the Professor that very evening in his room upstairs, for if not, he would invite him to coffee and a smoke. I could only reply that, of course, he could ask whom he liked to his own rooms, but that I could not promise until the time came, whether or not I should feel in the humour for the introduction.

To tell the truth I was not so very particularly keen about getting in with *Taraxacum's* queer lot, much as my liking for himself had strengthened and increased.

Although, upon the whole, I think that I cer-

tainly had reason to be dissatisfied, not to say rather disgusted with the contents of the colonel's long letter, yet somehow I did feel better and lighter hearted ; at any rate the communication, unsatisfactory as it was, had at least done something to dispel the wearing suspense, and utter ignorance of what had become of her, which had up to that time been worrying me.

Yes, I certainly felt better and more like myself, as I made up my mind to walk down to the school to find out Ferdy, of whom I had never once thought; nor had the possibility of the precious boy being left behind ever even occurred to me.

It must have been a presentiment, or I don't know why exactly I should feel my heart begin to yearn as it did towards the speckle-faced youngster. But is it not marvellous how, under change of circumstances, we are apt to find our feelings also so entirely changing from one time to another ?

Just as I arrived at the place a whole shoal of scholastics, a miscellaneous lot of English, Saxon, and other nations, came tumbling out of a side-door into a sort of dusty enclosure, which I suppose they dignified by the name of their playing field.

There was a sufficient leaven amongst them of the British element, for the youngsters to show signs of some sort of noise and fun in their escape from con-

finement, instead of the usual sweet-stuff-absorbing, slouchy, do-nothing occupations of the genuine continental youth in his play hours.

Almost the very last of the lot turned out master Ferdy himself; certainly when I first caught sight of him, by no means so miserable and depressed in spirit, in appearance at least, as he declared himself to be; and I will so far give him credit, as to allow that, before I had talked to him for many minutes, he really seemed to become, while dilating to me upon the ill usage and shock his feelings had undergone in being cast out as he had been, from a happy home, and from his beloved mamma's apron strings, at less than a moment's notice, to be sent to dwell in the house of the stranger without any preparation or previous intimation.

"But they are not all strangers, as they might have been," I reasoned with him; "you knew them all, masters and schoolfellows, for months before. Immediate change of scene was, you know, necessary for your dear sister's health; and ought not the great happiness of her recovery and most unlooked-for restoration, snatched as she had been from the very jaws of death, to much more than compensate you for any temporary inconvenience which the sudden turn of circumstances may have caused yourself?"

"Ah, but that is just the worst of it," replied the

desponding youth; "for knowing me before, the other boys have done nothing but tease and torment me ever since I have been sent here. So that if it wasn't wicked, I think I could almost, for some reasons, wish that Katie had not got well, or at least not quite so suddenly," the abominable young scoundrel went on to say, with an artless though cold-blooded candour, for which at the moment I felt inclined to strangle him:—"For that is just the worst of it for poor me; as long as they thought that I had lost my dear sister, which was the first report, the boys pitied me, and gave me lots of lollipops and other good things, in kindly trying to comfort me; but when they found out that Katie was not really dead after all, but had gone away in the railway train with all the rest of them, they all began to kick me as an impostor, and have bullied me awfully ever since.

"Some of them have got up all sorts of stories, that papa and mamma have run away because they could not pay their debts; and left me here in pawn with old Strenglitz for what is owing to him for my schooling; and they declare that Katie's illness was all sham, just to deceive and put the tradespeople off their guard. It is really too bad, isn't it, now, cousin Frank?"

"Well, you know," I replied with words of philosophical comfort, "that it is not true; so what can it

matter what such young idiots say? But tell me, have you heard at all from home, how your sister is going on? or have you had a letter from Katie yourself, by chance?"

The creature's eyes brightened up and began to twinkle with an expression of that innate mischief which, I think, I have before mentioned as an occasional characteristic of that ingenuous youth.

I think I had never before so much perceived how handsome those great eyes of his were, and they laughed just like his sister's. I felt myself, as I looked at them, inclined to forgive his late atrociously selfish sentiments all for the sake of those eyes.

"Yes; I have had a letter myself," he said grinning, "which if you like I will lend you to read, cousin Frank; and besides that there was another letter enclosed in a cover directed to me, which I was not sure whether I was right in receiving, after the thrashing you threatened me with, and the promise I had made to you of never again being the means of any correspondence passing between sister Katie and anybody as long as I lived.

"But you may look at the direction if you like:" and he produced it from his pocket, grinning like a young hyena.

"And so you have been troubled with conscientious scruples as to the propriety of delivering this

letter all this time, for fear of my punishment, have you ?" I enquired, snatching it out of his hand. "Don't you know, you young rascal, that to all good rules there are always exceptions ?"

"Well, if you must know, it was partly that reason, and partly because, now I am here at this horrid place as a boarder, I cannot get out and about the streets as I could when I lived at home." Here he was on the point of relapsing into a fit of the dismals, if I had not roused him with a friendly shake. "Here we have to ask leave to go out, and no end of botheration; and when I did, on a half-holiday three or four days ago, call at your lodgings just to ask your advice, you see, about this letter, whether it would not be the right thing to send it back at once under cover to my papa"——

Young Impudence stood there, leering out of the corners of his eyes, and grinning again enough to split his mouth at both ends——

"The woman at your house told me that you had gone away, they didn't know where, but without paying your debts, and that they thought you had left Dresden altogether, though some people said that you had been caught and shut up in the public gaol for your crimes."

"The devil they did !" I shot out in a fury.

"Well, you know, cousin, that is not true, so what can it matter what such old idiots say?" he said, quite demurely. The natural impudence of that young imp at thirteen certainly beat anything I ever met with at his time of life, or even a good deal older.

"Anyhow," he continued, "she swore that she did not know where you could be found; so I brought the letter back again home, or at least to this horrid place, with me; and not feeling quite sure that you would consider me bound by my promise to send it back to papa, or even to Katie herself, I have kept it up to this time for consideration."

Too delighted, and eager to get away home with my letter, promising to see Ferdy again in a day or two, when I should hope to find him in a happier frame of mind, I dismissed the young cub with a *tip*, which, in those weight-carrying thalers, and being fully commensurate with the ecstatic state of my own feelings,—having, you see, myself received a more than respectable remittance,—made both his round eyes stretch wider than ever; my generosity on this occasion having evidently far exceeded his wildest calculations.

I really felt jolly myself and gratified to see the urchin run off crowing to his playmates, any or all of whom I had also pledged myself to separately thrash for him, in case of their ever again venturing to repeat

or circulate the groundless and defamatory reports against his, and my relations.

"For they are your near relations as well as mine, except Katie, you know, ain't they, cousin Frank?" put in Ferdy, adroitly bringing up that further inducement for me to feel a personal interest in his quarrels.

CHAPTER III.

"Patience herself would startle at this letter."
As You Like It. Act iv.

A DOZEN or even more sides of closely-interwoven running hand, crossed, and in some parts re-crossed again, did that most dear and welcome letter contain.

I cannot make up my mind to let you see it all, as I have done the colonel's and others, though I still have it by me.

There are, you see, my dear fellow, perhaps some things in it that nobody else but myself, for whom it was intended, ever ought to see, at any rate they never shall. But I don't mind so much giving you some extracts from it, or rather allowing you to write down from my dictation the main bulk of its contents, just as they came from poor Katie herself, only omitting or reserving to myself some of the few private passages to which I have alluded.

[The young lady's letter itself, of the exterior of which I casually obtained sight, was itself a perfect curiosity as a specimen of epistolary literature; but voluminous

as it was, when I came to listen to the length and detail of what my friend accorded to me as *extracts* from it, I could, in truth, only marvel how so much could be contained in these pages, numerous even as they were.]

So then, [started Lambard] there is no need to give you at length the poor girl's preface of fears, protestations, and reiterated self-reproaches for venturing to write to me unbeknown, and without her parents' sanction; that she felt sure, she said, even then that we should never meet, or, under any circumstances, be ever allowed to see each other again: that, miserable as that certainty made her, she could only hope and trust that in this, our last communication for ever, she should not fall in my estimation and regard for such an avowal; still, that it was more especially for my own sake, and to save me from a secret and fearful danger hanging over me, that she so longed to have been permitted, if only in one last interview, to have had an opportunity of personally warning me; and had now in despair, determined to run the risk of writing on a matter which, though she felt nobody else in the world would understand or even listen to, she yet felt, that if conveyed in time to myself, might be of the most vital importance in securing the future happiness of my life, perhaps even my life itself.

"Do you remember," the letter went on to say, "that I once told you how I feared and held in positive terror that dreadful little Mr. G——, and, in spite of myself, what a fearful power he seemed to exercise over me?

"You seemed annoyed and answered me shortly. I did not know you so well then, and feared that you were very cross with me for speaking on such a subject. I tried to act upon the advice you gave me, though, which I felt was right, and to speak to papa upon the subject; but when I thought I had really summoned up courage to do so,—you know, though always so fond and kind to me, how hasty and stern dear papa can at times be,—he stopped me so peremptorily, and with such a dreadful expression of annoyance, almost agony, in his look and manner, that I felt quite confused and overwhelmed. I feared I must have said something dreadfully wicked, perhaps, without meaning or knowing it.

"If I ever thought I should see you again, dear Frank, I could not have brought myself thus plainly to set down these thoughts and feelings.

"I felt that perhaps I had been so wicked that papa could never forgive me or love me again. Oh, I was very miserable. But that same evening he called me to him, and nothing could have been kinder

and more confidential than his manner was to me; but he desired me never to mention that subject again, nor let my thoughts run astray upon such superstitious follies, as he called them; and then, Frank, he went on to speak about you, and that I must always look upon you as a cousin and a brother, but never" —then came three or four lines entirely scratched out—" and I promised him to do so, and I tried, you know, to keep that promise faithfully, and to stop you in time, for I had by that time stronger reasons even than my promise to papa; but you would go on, you know, in spite of me.

"You will of course remember that lock of hair which had been so cunningly obtained through Ferdy; I told you of the strange influence which he almost directly avowed, and I felt that he had gained over me by that possession.

"You would not listen, and seemed to disbelieve me. I would have then told you more of the persecutions, and obtrusive annoyances I had undergone, if you had allowed me, and not stopped me so short; but feeling the shame and doubts which I have now confessed to you, I did not like to come upon the subject again.

"I was at times dreadfully unhappy, but then he went, as we all thought at least, entirely away, and

you had come to Dresden, you know ; and for a time I was at peace again in my mind, and began to look upon my past fears and feelings as bygone dreams and illusions, just as one wakes of a morning with a feeling of having been in great trouble or sorrow in one's dreams, without being able to recall the cause.

"I might have come to look upon it all as entirely the effect of my own imagination and fancy, had I not found out that my brother Ferdy also was subject to exactly the same indescribable sensations of attraction and yet terror in regard to that dreadful person (I cannot bear to name him, even to myself, somehow). He, Ferdy, told me of a strange scene he had actually himself been through under that wicked creature's influence.

"He said that at the risk, as he declared, of his very life, he had confessed the same to you—this he told me whilst I was so ill since that last day I saw you—but that you had only pooh-poohed and disbelieved him.

"You will perhaps still disbelieve me now ; but at that risk, at the risk of you considering me foolish, fanciful, a wicked story-teller, if you must, I will now confide in you a fearful secret, to which I have never yet alluded to a living soul ; and which I myself, while I tell it as a fact, and the truth, cannot pretend

to understand or account for, or even myself hardly believe.

"I have said before, on the other page of this letter, that we *thought* he had left Dresden, and that I was happier and more at peace in consequence. I was very, very happy when with you, my dear Frank—those were the happiest days I ever enjoyed in my life. One afternoon I was at home in our apartments by myself. I was in that soft easy-chair of mamma's with a book in my hand, but I was not reading. I was just thinking how really happy your arrival and pleasant companionship had made me : all of a sudden I looked up, and there was *He* standing by me, with that locket which I told you of, you know, open in his hand.

"I was so surprised that I could not find words to utter; but he seemed not to expect me to do so, at any rate he went on exactly as if it had been the most natural thing in the world that he should find himself there alone with me. Papa and mamma were out; and when I had sufficiently recovered myself to hear what he was saying, in the most soft and earnest tones he was entreating me to promise to try to become fond of him, and never to care for any one else.

"I do not know now what I said in answer to him, or whether I said anything at all, I am not sure; but

in the same sudden way in which he had appeared, he was gone, vanished; and I found myself again alone.

"The second time that exactly the same thing happened, was within a week or so of the other. He was again most kind and gentle in his manner, but spoke even more persuasively to the same purpose. That time, directly he was gone I rushed out and asked Harrison and our other maid-servant, whom I found in the outer room, if they had seen him. Both of them positively denied that any one had or could have been there. I am positively certain that I had not on either occasion been asleep, or that what I now write to you was a delusion; though how to account for it, I know not.

"The third time was on a Sunday afternoon in the *allée* on the way to the English church. I had been to the afternoon service alone, as mamma was unwell, and as it was getting dusk, I was walking as fast as I could, when all at once I perceived him at my side.

"Instead of his soft and gentle tones and manner, as on the former occasions, he at once, as he kept up with me, began to speak furiously, and to use the most dreadful threats. He brought up your name, and with the most dreadful words declared that if I ever thought of, or cared for you, he had power to destroy you body and soul.

"He went on to tell me something about you, and of your future happiness, which I will not, cannot believe; that it should depend entirely upon my consenting to listen to him, whether the strong power that he held over you should be exerted for your good or evil. I somehow collected myself enough to speak up, and to defy his power over you, whatever he might pretend to over myself.

"He said, with a horrible sneer, that you yourself knew whether he had not acquired unbounded power over you, when very young; and that once acquired it could never be lost. He appealed to my own experience whether he was boasting beyond his powers, in being able to make me think of him, dream of him, follow him even if he pleased, and then again, when it suited his purpose, even to forget him entirely, and be at times unable to recall his very name to my lips.

"I had made up my mind not to answer him any more, or to appear conscious of his presence, but I felt my strength failing me with fright, and I could not stir another step; and feeling desperate, I gasped out that whatever his boasted power over me might be, he could never make me like him or care for him, or regard him with any other feeling than dread and hatred unutterable.

"He quite gnashed his teeth, and seemed beside

himself with rage and fury. He almost seemed to choke with the dreadful words and threats which he repeated, that if I ever dared to care for you, or if ever you should express anything of that sort to me, that from that moment every sort of calamity and misery should be in store for you; and that for myself, though it might, and probably would, cost him his very soul, —such was his own terrible expression—he would so humiliate and have his revenge upon me, that I should be torn from my home, my friends, and everything I held dear in this world; and if he pleased he could make me too glad to be allowed to follow and serve him as his slave.

"He had just pronounced that last dreadful threat when Harrison came up, having been sent out to meet me, and asked me what I was doing there, sitting on the bench where she found me, all by myself; and when I asked her, was quite certain that no one else had, or could have been there, as she must either have passed them, or have seen them going on down towards the other end of the wide avenue.

"That was on the very Sunday before our long-talked of walk to the Wolfshügel together. When I arrived at home with Harrison, who scolded me all the way along, you had already come in, and were sitting with papa.

"I wondered that nobody seemed to perceive the state of fright and agitation I had been in; but though you may find it difficult to credit, by the time the lights were brought in, I had not only quite recovered myself, but actually, for the time, forgotten the whole of that strange and terrific interview.

"That was not the first time that, under the same mysterious and special influence to which I had in other ways been subjected, the memory of that person, and his threats, and evil words, had entirely passed out of my mind.

"I think, on looking back, that I may have had some sort of vague idea, as of some horrid dream—long, long before—though retaining none of the particulars or details which have since come back, and remain in all their terrible reality.

"I tell you this particularly, lest you should look upon me as a hypocrite and deceitful, in seeming so quiet and as usual that same evening; or blame me for appearing to be so happy and light-hearted—as I really was—when we were setting out for that walk, that lovely afternoon, to the Wolfshügel. It was not until we had climbed up to the top of that high place, and——you know what you were speaking about, that it all rushed back into my memory. I saw him suddenly close by—almost between us—as if in a

flash of lightning. Did he strike you in the face?—for that was my impression of the moment. Whether you saw him as well as myself, I cannot feel sure, though you certainly uttered the name at the same instant. How we got home that evening I cannot now the least remember.

"I remember nothing more distinctly until the next morning, when Ferdy came into my room with a letter, which he had just received enclosed under cover to himself, and which, as he assured me—and I really believe—he felt compelled, though in spite of himself, to bring to me as he was desired immediately.

"He seemed in a strange state of mind himself—half terrified, and yet half laughing at me at the same time. Do you remember that I on a former occasion remarked to you how very odd the poor boy's character had lately become?—so suddenly changeable at times, and so unlike his former self?

"That dreadful letter had neither date nor signature, but beginning abruptly, with a repetition of the fearful threats and denunciations which he had already used against me in that last interview in the *allée,* it went on to accuse me of having broken my solemn promises—which, before Heaven, I never made!—and that having thus forfeited my soul by my falsehoods and wicked deceit, I should within ten

days, or even less, become wholly within his power, as he had told me ; that I should be yielded up to him as his slave, and owe even my very existence to his will.

"My reason and thoughts then became all confusion, as soon as I had read through that letter. I have no idea whether it was for hours only, or for whole days and nights, that I lay without sensation or remembrance. Those who were about me would know, but I have never liked to ask mamma ; and Harrison, when I try to question her, pretends to misunderstand me, and not know what I am talking about.

"But though I was really quite insensible for some while, I was not in that state—as they evidently imagined—the whole time. I became sensible and broad awake ; I knew that I was in my room, in my own bed, but so entirely under the influence of that awful will, that I had no power either to speak or even move of my own accord. If it were not for the former scenes I had been through, and when I am as certain that I was awake, as I am at this very moment I write, I might have persuaded myself that all I felt and went through were only dreams and the fancies of nightmare ; but so vivid and real were the impressions left upon my mind, that nothing shall ever make me doubt, or persuade me that all did not actually happen as I remember and can describe.

"I was lying perfectly still, quite sensible, but motionless—I was thinking of Mr. G——'s dreadful threats, and whether he really could have any influence or effect over your happiness.

"All of a sudden, (I can hardly bear the horrible shame of the thought, as it now recurs to me) he was there, standing by my bedside, just as he had suddenly appeared on the former occasions. I only wish that I could believe, and console myself with the idea, that it was only a dream and my imagination!

"He again began his entreaties, but soon passed on to his former threats, and worse. Again working himself into such a passion, that he almost screamed as he told me that now I should see what his power really was.

"I felt a cold shuddering come right over me, and the whole room seemed suddenly full of living beings, though I can now convey no very definite description of them, or compare them to any particular form or shape—perhaps the nearest idea I can give of them would be as large bubbles, or wreaths of smoke, now distinct, now merging one into another, but all surrounding me, and struggling to seize me, and lift me up, as I lay there without power to move upon my bed.

"That dreadful creature was all the while gesticu-

lating in the midst of them, as they rolled and floated around him, seeming to command, and urging them in the fiercest tones to obey him.

"But every time they had just raised me and seemed about to bear me away, I could feel that they were driven off, and kept at bay by some other being or spirit, who seemed to be on my side, and to have come to protect me.

"No more definite than the others, I sometimes fancied that I caught a glimpse of a bright floating body of light, and as it passed and repassed over me I could feel a soft breath, or as it were the gentlest touch of some warm smooth surface, smooth as silk or ivory, against my cheek or my hand.

"He appeared to be able to see the spirits or whatever they were, more distinctly than I could do, and to shrink back out of reach from the bright form which was thus defending me, but in his rage more than once even ventured to address it defiantly.

"'I can call up stronger powers yet!' he cried vehemently, 'which even you cannot prevail against; and as to her——or that fellow Lambard, whom I hate, I have power enough to make him raise his hand against her own father, ay, even rouse him to murder him, if I choose; and we shall see whether she will cling to him after that;' at that most horrible threat, with a

tremendous effort I regained the power over my voice, and cried out against him, at the sound of which he and all immediately vanished; and I remember no more, for that time at least.

"I have no idea how long it may have been before I recovered consciousness enough to find myself lying all alone in profound darkness, without, as far as I could make out, anybody or any sound of life near me.

"Had he then really found means of carrying out his dreadful threats, and had I been torn away from home and friends, and all belonging to me? Then came over me the horrible and freezing feeling that I had been thought dead, and was in my coffin, buried alive.

"I do not know now whether even if I had wished I had power enough to try to move, or to stretch my hand to know by the touch whether my dreadful anticipations were too true; but I felt that I did not dare thus satisfy myself.

"I closed my eyelids again in despair, never hoping or caring to try to open them again; but after a time I became aware of, rather I should say by feeling than hearing, a sensation of distant shrieks of laughter, and wild cries which seemed to come nearer and nearer, until they were close round me; and I felt myself surrounded by the same floating, gliding, but quite impalpable beings which I have before tried to describe.

"Without any power, or even as it seemed will to resist, I felt myself rising slowly, and very gently, and floating away in the midst, merged and mingling with myriads of light beings, into a great boundless expanse of air, and yet always preserving my separate individuality. I retained a quite distinct impression, as I felt myself thus moving upwards, of looking down upon my own form lying back as if asleep or fainted on the bed, but it was only just for an instant, quicker almost than a thought.

"I did not somehow feel afraid, nor to care even to know where I was floating off to; though at the same time I seemed conscious of some irresistible summons or order which, though none had been audibly given, I knew intuitively that all of us had received, and were now bound and obliged to obey.

"My next distinct sensation was that of finding myself in a large strange room, ordinarily furnished like most German rooms, except that at the further end stood a great old-fashioned wardrobe or press, made of some very dark wood, with carved figures and wreaths of flowers about it. I recognised it by description at once, and so knew in whose room I was, because it flashed through my mind, that when he used to come and see us so much, Mr. G. had told papa about that curious old piece of furniture, as he was

always very fond of those sort of things, and liked picking them up as bargains; and I remembered that he had promised to go and see this, if the landlord would be likely to have parted with it; but I don't know whether he ever had done so.

"By that I recognised that I must be in *his* room; and there sure enough I saw *Him* himself, standing by a sort of three-legged brazier in which there was fire, or at least smoke was coming out of it. He was not alone—there was with him a tall, cadaverous looking man, whose pale face bore the most dreadful expression of every sort of reckless wickedness I ever could imagine.

"At the very time I was conscious of a feeling of surprise of how it happened that I could even know of the sins and horrors which I saw expressed in those features; and then I suddenly perceived that in the state of existence in which I then was, I had the power of seeing and knowing all that was working and going on in his and his companion's minds and hearts; that of the former, in particular, appeared like a transparent bladder, or large globule, quite full of loathsome black worms, and slimy creeping things all twisted and struggling, and devouring one another, though all seemed immediately to come to life again, and to increase, as soon as destroyed—and I seemed

to have understanding given me to know that these were all the wickednesses, and most miserable sins that have ever existed since the world began; they were falsehoods, and hatred, and despair; and yet all intermingled and overwhelmed with contempt for his accomplice; while at the same time he was quite enjoying a horrible pleasure in having thus tempted, and implicated the little wretch into the same crimes and horrors as himself.

"I could read, that is, I knew it all as plainly as if it were written on a clear sheet of paper.

"G—— appeared at first—when he became conscious of my presence before him—dreadfully frightened. I cannot tell whether he actually saw me in any form or not; but after some hesitation, and seeming to collect himself, he and his wicked companion took something out of the brazier, and then I recognised the locket which contained my own hair, and something told me that I must submit entirely to his powerful will, and could only throw myself upon his mercy.

"All this time the whole room was full of the beings like bubbles or wreaths of smoke, who were continually flitting and floating in the air all round me. I still occasionally seemed to know of the wild

cries and screams of laughter, which seemed to be off far away.

"When they had taken the locket out and laid it on the table before them, G—— seemed to have become more composed, and addressed me. I felt constrained to answer him, whether I would or not; and I did so meekly and submissively, as I felt obliged to do. He began to taunt me with having defied him, and asked if I now doubted the extent of his powers. He told me that he had loved me, but that was now past, and that it was now too late—that having despised his good will, I should learn what his ill will could do for me. I began to beg and pray him to let me go back home, if only to take leave of my parents, before being taken from them for ever.

"He scoffed at me in reply, and said—'And your dear cousin Frank, I suppose, you would like to see again?' and then he and his companion laughed together, and he said, 'we will bring him here to see you.' But the other said—'Don't try too much, or don't go too far at once.' 'At any rate, I can settle him,' he replied; and he took down a glove, which I knew at once—as I knew everything else intuitively—to be one of yours, which you had dropped that very

day we were on the Wolfshügel. He stretched his hands, and breathed and muttered over it—as I had seen them do over the locket before. 'Now,' said he, 'he is in my power; and it depends upon yourself whether he escapes scot free, or is condemned to the most miserable fate that any man can endure in this life, and worse hereafter.'

"Horror-stricken and desperate, I just remember uttering a loud cry; when the wardrobe I have mentioned suddenly burst open, and some person, whether mortal or supernatural I could not tell—rushed out and overturned the table and the light—and I remember no more, except a dim vague sensation of being borne away with a rapid motion, and without the slightest personal effort or exertion on my own part, wafted hither and thither, as it were, through incalculable space, upon the softest of soft warm summer-breezes, bearing sweet scents of the most delicious flowers—while all around and within me seemed to reign the most perfect sense of absolute calm and repose. But of these latter impressions I have a very vague, and different remembrance from all those which I have so minutely described and detailed to you.

"My next distinct recollection is when I found myself back again, lying in my own bed, with papa, mamma, and all around me; and I even fancied you,

for a moment, dear Frank, were near me—or was that only a happy fancy ?

"You will think, I know—and I should have fancied myself—that all this was only a dreadful dream while I was so ill.

"To no one else have I ever even mentioned all that I have now—having once begun—told you, at such length ; but had I done so, all would have told me the same—that it was a nightmare and delusion. I should, as I say, have thought so myself—but, Frank, in my own hand I found, when I came to myself, clasped tightly, that locket and hair—frizzled and singed by the fire through which it had been. That must have been reality—and I could not have got possession of that in my dream ; though how I did get it, I have no remembrance or idea.

"The broken locket itself I managed, unperceived, to throw under the wheels of the railway on our journey down here ; what remains of the hair, I now enclose to you, my dearest Frank, as a last remembrance of your once dear Katie. And now"——

Well, never mind the rest. She goes on to allude to her astonishment and feelings at their sudden removal, describes their journey southwards, and then finishing with more self-reproaches and deprecations for having thus written to tell me this strange un-

accountable story—which, if it had not been for De Lyons' perfectly distinct corroboration, I should not have known what to think of—not that it isn't a regular puzzler, take it which way you will;—but that she felt that she could never rest, day or night, until she had thus relieved herself of the fearful secret which she felt weighing down her senses, her life, her very soul: and so winding up with a most emphatic, most touching warning to myself, to beware of the little fiend who—as she had too much reason to fear—could exercise such a terrible power over me and my future destinies.

CHAPTER IV.

EXPERTO CREDE.

Amidst a tumult of conflicting feelings and resolutions, two special objects seemed to raise themselves predominant over all others in my mind.

You may easily conceive them. Increased interest—well, yearning love, if you must have it spoken plainly, for poor Katie; and vengeance, signal and condign, upon that little miscreant Gorles, let the consequences or risks to myself be what they might.

I felt, however, altogether lighter at heart, and more myself again now that I had a settled, I might say, these two settled purposes of life before me.

I would start at once. In pursuit of which, though, first?

Now that I knew where to find them, should I boldly follow the De Lormes, and try another urgent appeal to my uncle's feelings? It seemed to me at one time—as his own letter had almost admitted—as if only in common gratitude for having been the means

of rescuing her as I had,—from affection for his own recovered child, he could not have the heart to refuse me; and then, again, I had a strong inward conviction that any such attempt would be hopeless. Would it not be cruel to her thus to resuscitate quenched feelings? For by her letter—which I might betray, too, by my indiscretion—she seemed to have become convinced that we should not—must not hope ever to meet again, and to have already submitted and reconciled herself to that fiat. Should I leave that question unsettled until I had followed up and done for Gorles? But, then, see her again, if only once more, to bid her farewell for ever, I felt I must.

In my perplexity I had no one to consult, or to whom I could unbosom myself, save my worthy friend De Lyons, to whom, indeed, thrown together as we had lately been under such very peculiar circumstances, I had naturally imparted much of my confidence.

Though decidedly a "rum 'un" in his way, *Taraxacum* was a thoroughly good-hearted fellow at bottom, mixing with his speculative and sometimes rather high-flown imaginative flights a fair average of worldly wisdom or common sense, as I think he in the main showed in the plain-spoken advice which he offered me; although at the time I found the same

difficult to reconcile with my then excited feelings, and only submitted to be led by it rather from not knowing what else to do, than from any conviction of its truth.

"Drop them, my dear old fellow," he said; "drop them both,—both love and revenge: take my advice, and drop them. The one will wear your poor heart into fiddle-strings, all to no purpose; while with the other,—in that particular quarter, you will, I fear, burn your fingers most infernally.

"What can be the use of your running your own head a regular mucker against a wall? suffering as you are from the combined effects of the two most ghastly symptoms of moral blindness to which poor rotten human nature can be subject to, '*Spooniness*'—excuse my thus familiarly calling that most delusive and painful disorder, a temporary derangement as it in fact is of the *Odyle*, or electric principle of vitality—and Spite, which is a short and comprehensive way of expressing the wrath of your righteous indignation, if you thus prefer to express it.

"As to the first of your schemes, or fixed purposes of life, as you have just called them, take my word for it—the word of very likely a much bigger fool than yourself—I will grant that, if you like, as to things in general, but in this case I am not, you know, in the

same predicament as yourself, my poor fellow, blinded and groping in darkness.

"Your love is hopeless. There must be some very strong and quite unsurmountable reasons for the 'stern Parent' taking the decided part he has done, though we may not perhaps be able to guess or fathom them, even if we tried; but don't let us try, and there is an end of it. Perhaps, for all parties, it is better that we shouldn't."

My Mentor here assumed a knowing expression of face, just as if he might know, and even did know, a great deal more than he chose to say. Whenever he got upon his mysterious metaphysical tack, he was apt to put on that wise conceited look and manner.

"Now," he continued, "if you will only trust to me, as after what we have been through together, you may perhaps be more inclined to do than you otherwise might have been, I will see you through this trouble, and show you how you may in no time be cured, and relieved of all the inconvenience and heart-soreness of a hopeless attachment; not that it really is the heart, after all, that suffers, but your spleen which gets out of order.

"Ah, you may sigh and groan internally, and feel, as I know you do now, not only that you never can recover or forget, but even have the thought that it

would be a sort of sacrilege and wrong even to wish to do so; and from a sort of morbid respect for the object of your *tendresse* convince yourself that it is only your melancholy duty to hug and cherish the memories which are now gnawing at, and torturing your very vitals.

"Believe me, that is a wrong view altogether. Having fairly satisfied yourself as you, as a man of the world, must, and as I can thought-read enough to feel certain that in your inmost self you already do feel satisfied, that any attempts or efforts on your part are utterly and entirely hopeless; nay, more, if it will be any comfort, though a cruel one, perhaps, now to know a certainty, I may as well tell you that, interested as I am on your behalf, I have within a day or two consulted a *clairvoyante* friend of mine, a patient of the Professor's, who has over and over again been proved to be right and utterly infallible; and from her I ascertained enough, without going into any details, to feel perfectly certain that all your fondest hopes and longings in that track are destined to come to nothing. Were I not quite as positive that her prescience of the future is as true and trustworthy, or even more so, than my own or anybody else's memory of any event which is past, I would not thus strongly urge and persuade you; but under the circumstances, for the young

lady's sake, if not for your own, I again repeat, drop the whole idea; and then for your own peace and comfort get your foot out of it, and let it be to you only like a page torn out of a book."

"That is easier said than done," I answered, sadly enough, "even if I wished to do so. An attachment such as mine——"

"Gammon and spinach," interrupted my friend, most irreverently. "Once make up your mind that you would wish to do so, and I, or rather my excellent friend, the Professor, will set you all right again in one leetle '*zen minuten*,' as he will say, if you will only come up this evening, as you have already half promised to do, to my rooms to meet him.

"*Experto crede!* I too have also suffered," and here the sinner actually tried to get up a sort of snivel, while I could hardly make out, as he affected to dash away a tear from the back of his hand, whether he was in earnest or only making fun of me.

But he went on quite in a serious tone: "Do you think that I, too, have not known all the feelings and pangs under which you at this moment internally writhe? Have I not, too, passed sleepless nights, loathed my meals, in vain sought consolation in my pipe and the strongest tobacco?

"Have I not, too, suffered all the qualms, the

restlessness, and miseries of a desperate attachment? Wandered I cared not whither, with my head on one side, my eyes turned up, and the corners of my mouth drawn down, slippers down at heel, and my fists plunged into the depths of my breeches pockets; for all the world like a moulting blackbird with the pip,—which is, excuse me, my dear fellow, exactly what you have been reminding me of for the last fortnight; and you don't know, having gone through it all myself, how really I have felt for you.

"The usual run of that state of things is, if left to time only to wear itself out, a matter of three, six, or nine months, or, in very bad cases, even a year or eighteen months may elapse before all traces of the malady are completely effaced. That is a long time to look forward to, particularly when spent in pain and discomfort all to no purpose: so do as I did, get the Professor to help you, and have done with it at once.

"The sensation of relief, immediate as it is, is alone worth experiencing for the exquisite pleasure of the contrast, just like the first night of rest after having a three-fanged back tooth out which has been racking you for weeks past. As to my own experience in that line, to which I have already alluded, I ought to know something about the matter, having myself caught it as hard over the head and ears as most

people of my weight and inches: I was most awfully bad, just as I had been when I went through the measles and hooping-cough: I always do things in extremes, somehow—that's the nature of the beast, you see.

"I was regularly floored, down on my back with all the same aches and grinding pains of hopes, and fears, and doubts, and despair, just for all the world as you are yourself now suffering.

"And I had also to bear in addition what you may thank your lucky stars you have been spared; I mean the worst of all damnable feelings—jealousy to wit—a-top of all the rest, you know. There was not only a 'stern relentless Parient' in my case, but the dove-eyed Rosina herself, that was the name of my paragon, was playing me off the whole while, a shabby shilly-shally sort of game, against another fellow.

"It was actually only on the Sunday evening that we had been swearing eternal constancy upon the tiles of her father's back premises, up which I had climbed at the risk of my neck, for a stolen interview at her chamber window,—only on one Sunday, I tell you, and dash my button-holes! if she did not go and marry the eldest son of the Court Chiropodist, or to give him his rightful title and dignities in full German, *der Konigliche-oberhof-leichdorn schneider* to his

Saxon Majesty and all his royal family, on the very next Thursday of the same week!

"I really thought I should have died of it; and certainly never hoped to care for life, or any of its pleasures or interests again.

"I took to my bed, and my heart refused to be comforted; and I had next door to made up my mind to blow my brains out, or cut my jugular vein, when the Professor, whom I did not know so well in those days, came to see me, and kindly took me in hand, in spite of my half remonstrances, and feeling as you do now, that there was something unfeeling and inconsistent in wishing to be freed from one's own crushed and maimed affections.

"However, I consented. He put me off quietly to sleep, simply to sleep, and when I awoke in the morning your humble servant was himself again. I looked back upon the whole of that interesting little episode of my life as if it had happened and been finished years and years ago, and that all my old feelings had had time to die out and change, as would of course be the effect of time, instead of their being, as was really the case, '*heigh presto*' all changed and gone in a single moment.

"I can only tell you that I was so thoroughly cured, that within a week after, I had torn up the

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last of my lost one's sweet-scented notes to light my pipe with.

"I have met her constantly since with the greatest serenity, without a check to my breath, or a flutter in my pulse; yet, bless your heart, my dear fellow, I remember when only to see that girl come into the room, nay, I call to mind one occasion when even the very sight of her pork-feeding old father's greasy hat upon a hall table would set every individual nerve and fibre in my whole system in one everlasting tingle; and now—I can go perfectly unmoved, and with unimpaired appetite, to dine at the very table, which I have been asked to do more than once, of that lady's rather under-bred, though well-to-do chiropedical husband; and have been actually received on those occasions by Rosina herself as hostess, without, as I tell you, a twinge, or the consciousness of any unpleasant feeling—except perhaps hunger.

"Deuced good dinners they gave, too; and the only thoughts of vengeance I have ever entertained towards him, honest man that he is, are when I have felt myself more than ordinarily walking into his victuals, or punishing his liquors. That must be a proof of the genuineness of my complete cure, you see; for no bravado or self-assurance could force an appetite if there were a spark of the old love left in me, though

injured pride, or a strong self-control might choke down other indications even enough to cheat one's self, perhaps."

Such were some of *Taraxacum's* simple and perhaps not wholly ineffectual arguments by which he urged me to meet and make the acquaintance of his learned friend the Professor.

I promised to consider the matter, though I claimed the right of remaining undecided as to whether I should put myself in the strange man's hands or not; but before the evening arrived I was actually anxious and nervously impatient for the interview.

CHAPTER V.

THE PROFESSOR.

"Est-ce la physique que vous voulez apprendre?"—MOLIÈRE.

THE Professor, although fairly enough described by young Ferdy as to his personal appearance, was not exactly what I had expected to see him.

I had, I almost believe, pictured him to myself with perhaps rather too lively an imagination, as likely to enter the room in a high-peaked cap, and wearing a black velvet robe, embroidered with skulls and cross-bones, and other symbolical phylacteries; instead of which, when I walked into De Lyons' room, I only saw a rather common-place looking gentleman, apparently between five-and-thirty and forty; my first impression being, I think, that he seemed rather cleaner as to his fingers and linen than the average of his compatriots.

I remembered Ferdy's comparison of his awful head of hair to a regular mane, which is exactly what it was like, and upon his removing his dark spectacles for the purpose of wiping them, I was struck

with the extraordinary brilliancy, amounting to quite a scintillating glow, of his perfectly round eyes.

He rose courteously as De Lyons went through the ceremony of introduction; and as I grasped the hand which was cordially, and yet with a well-bred hesitation, offered, it may have been fancy, but I certainly felt—though there was no particular pressure on his part—a distinct thrill rush through my whole frame.

I have at other times experienced the same sort of feeling upon suddenly meeting any old and dear friend, or upon grasping the hand of any one I have been very fond of, or even been interested in; but never, I think, as on that occasion, with a perfect stranger.

His voice was peculiarly pleasant, soothing, and harmonious, like some well-tuned instrument, so that I then, for the first time in my life, began to think German not quite such a barbarous, hopelessly crack-jaw lingo as I had always done.

I certainly was from the first moment conscious of a strong attraction towards the strange man, as we sat there opposite to one another, and starting as we did with a sort of desultory conversation, upon various common-place topics, between the puffs of our well-filled meerschaums.

My German was but limited, that is, as soon as I

attempted to plunge into anything beyond the shallowest levels of conversation; and as the Professor's English seemed to be just about on the same par, though he perhaps understood it better than I did his language, we set out at first with a sort of mutual compromise in regard to that difficulty, each keeping to his own vernacular.

It was not till later in the evening, when, as I shall have to tell you, the Professor became more animated, and warmed up in the discussion and explanation of the interesting subjects to which our conversation eventually drifted; and perceiving, I suppose, that I could not always quite follow him, nor perfectly convey my own meaning to his mind, that he brought into use a practical instance of his amazing powers, which, going far beyond any ordinarily recognised bounds of human capability, effectually simplified our means of colloquial intercourse in a manner which made an indelible impression on my mind.

Our conversation began, as I say, upon the most everyday common-place matters; I think it was upon different places which our friend had seen, and persons whom he had known, during a short visit to England.

I was so far glad to find that the Professor had not come from London with the impression that Leicester

Square was the chief centre, or Regent Street the most fashionable *quartier* of that metropolis.

Nor did he make tender enquiries after the illustrious Mr. Smith, of London, with whom enlightened foreigners will, as a rule, insist upon your being on the most intimate terms, as being one of the best known and most influential of its inhabitants, whether in aristocratic or commercial circles; whether it is that great "Meester Smith" who had relations of untold wealth in India, or his namesake who possesses a chateau at Bayswater or Camberwell hardly inferior in size or splendour to Windsor or Versailles themselves.

The Professor, I thought, did not himself seem anxious to come upon those more profound subjects, which I, now I had made up my mind to at least hear, or learn something of the wonders on which *Taraxacum* had so fully enlarged, was rather looking forward to with a certain degree of curiosity, although at the same time feeling a little shy about starting the subject on my own account.

De Lyons, however, in his usual harum-scarum manner soon brought up the question by abruptly breaking in upon a pause which had occurred, with—

"Well, but look here, Professor, I didn't bring you

two fellows together here to prose over your 'baccy' and talk nothing but humdrums; it is for something more than that, that I have been at the pains of making you and Lambard here acquainted, and I hope before long to see you great chums.

"He is an awful unbeliever, and I know in his heart looks upon you, and all your science as a regular humbug—don't you, now, Lambard?" addressing me; "confess, like a man. And I want the Professor just to show you a little of what's what, and make a convert and a true believer of you."

I observed a shade of annoyance, which I did not wonder at, pass over the countenance of the learned man, at this, to say the least of it, out-of-taste speech, though his manner was still as courteous, to myself particularly, as he replied—

"My dear young friend, I am afraid I shall never convince you that I have no object in, or the least desire even to exhibit what you are pleased sometimes to call my wonders and powers for the sake of eliciting either the surprise or applause of the public, far less for the mere gratification of curiosity, or the natural love of the marvellous in every one to whom you may have been vaunting,—very probably exaggerating their extent. As to your friend here—*our* friend, if he will allow me to call him so (bowing

most deferentially towards myself)—if he as yet knows little or nothing of the philosophical and abstruse sciences to which I, by a combination of circumstances, have been led to devote the best years of my life, secrets of nature on which, although I may happen to have concentrated such faculties and talents as I may possess, and which, perhaps, after all, might have served me better if turned in some other direction—I am not sure whether, all engrossing and wonderful as they are, it would not be yet wiser and more for his happiness to pause and turn away, though at the very threshold of such knowledge, without venturing one step further.

"'Knowledge is power,' it is true; but whether great power, either moral or physical, really conduces so much as is generally supposed to the happiness of its possessor, I am inclined rather to doubt.

"The acquisition of such power itself is so unsatisfactory, the craving and desire for more so insatiable, that the more you acquire, and have perhaps the credit of possessing, which, after all, is but a shallow, worthless reputation to any intellect which becomes every day more aware of how little, and how paltry all that the human mind can arrive at or comprehend is in comparison to what is beyond its own limited power to grasp: the more you learn, I

say, the more you come to know of how much there is that never can be learned. There is no rest in these physical sciences, no goal, no end but hopeless vexation and disappointment."

There was a tone of deep melancholy and kindly feeling in his tones, as he gave vent to these sentiments, which was quite touching. I felt myself becoming still more irresistibly drawn towards and interested in the mysterious man.

"You also, De Lyons," he continued, "superficially as you have at times, off and on, turned your attention to these matters, and occasionally taken part in our *séances* and physical experiments, must have seen and learnt enough to bear me out as to the truth of what I now declare.

"Strange and wonderful as what little we do profess to know, and can perform, may seem to the uninitiated, is it not even doubly unsatisfactory to reflect that it is not only as nothing to what may and must be known hereafter, but that all these secrets and doctrines have undoubtedly been already known and even practised in bygone times, and then again entirely lost and buried with those who during their life had discovered and possessed them? The amount of invaluable treasure, in the form of physical science and knowledge, thus buried with the

dead is wonderful and heartbreaking to think upon; but enough of this for the present. If I can be of any real assistance in removing any ailment, or even solving any difficulty by which you or any friend should find himself inconvenienced, I would gladly put in use any means within my powers—such as they are; but as to making a convert, as I think you expressed it, or simply making an exhibition of any practical science which I may have acquired, pray disabuse yourself of the erroneous notion that there is either any pleasure, or gratification to me in any such display."

The Professor gave Master De Lyons this snub with so very marked a manner, though not at all viciously—I rather fancy that all the while he had a strong liking for his eccentric pupil, and looked upon his impudence with the indulgence which a superior genius often feels for a character exactly the opposite to its own—I am sure I quite winced and felt for my companion.

But not so that undaunted youth himself. "Well, governor," he answered, pertly, "don't begin to pitch into me. I am indiscreet, I know; always was from the day I was foaled, so it cannot be helped; but you see in the course of your jaw you happen to have yourself hit upon exactly what we want you to do for us:

your strict rule of life is, I am well aware, that all knowledge and superiority of science should be exerted only for the good and benefit of our fellow-creatures.

"Well, here, I guess, is a fine specimen of a fellow-creature in the shape of our friend Frank Lambard, who has, as we say in English, put his foot in it, that is, tumbled head and ears in love with a charming lady, (excuse my plain way of putting it, Lambard, and smother your blushes in redoubled clouds of smoke); and, worse than that, by some unlucky destiny has got himself embroiled, and subject to the animosity of that venomous little miscreant, Melchior Gorles, whom you know even better than I do, to possess such stunning powers, beyond all reckoning dangerous and terrible towards those who stand in his way, or attempt to run counter to him, as this hot-headed fellow declares his full intention of doing.

"Now, dear Professor, first eradicate the one hopeless passion from his system, as you kindly did for me, at once and for ever; and then give him some good advice, or at any rate a warning, a moral antidote, if you can, against the mischievous influence of that mongrel little son of a vampire, as he really is."

"Indeed, then," replied the Professor, gravely, "you do not speak without reason; for the power of evil against his enemies, or indeed any one against whom

he may wish to injure, possessed by that most singular little compatriot of yours is not to be despised. In intensity of natural malice I have never met his equal; I should even myself be very sorry to offend him, for he would, I know, be perfectly reckless as to what means or what powers he might have recourse to in carrying out his bad ends.

"But tell me," he said, "if I may be allowed to ask, when and in what manner have you encountered, or have had reason to feel this enmity against this really dangerous character?"

I was just considering how much I should tell, or rather, by telling how little I should be able to convey a sufficient explanation, when De Lyons cut in sharp, and, before I could collect myself, then and there before my very face gave the Professor the whole account of me, and all I had been doing since I had been at Dresden, chapter and verse, as he expressed it, interspersed with divers illustrations and explanations in his own peculiar style of language, which was at times more forcible perhaps, than elegant. Touching, I must so far give him credit, upon the young lady, and my relations in that quarter delicately enough, he wound up with a most detailed description of the machinations and evil designs of Gorles against poor Katie and myself.

The Professor certainly appeared much interested in all the latter part of the adventure, and in that scene particularly in which De Lyons had himself taken part, or rather witnessed through the chinks of the armoire; although, as I knew very well, remembering that the latter had gone straight to him for advice, the whole story, at least in its principal details, could not have been new to him.

Finding myself thus lugged, whether I would or no, into this unlimited confidence, and somehow, entire stranger as he was, I did not feel that reluctance or reserve which, I think, I should have done with any one else under similar circumstances, I still had much to add when De Lyons had done, of particulars which I myself had only learnt that very morning from Katie's letter, then still in my pocket; and what seemed to strike the Professor above all, was the fact of my never having personally met, not even having set eyes upon Gorles, as I declared, and as indeed was the case, since I had been at Eton six years before; and this led back to those times.

I then told them all about my old school-days, my former abhorrence of the little wretch, and the strange influence to which I had always felt myself subjected in regard to him.

"And that was when he was, as you say, but four-

teen or fifteen years of age ?" cried the Professor, quite excitedly, as he sprang up from his seat, his strange mane almost bristling up, and those tremendous eyes of his looking as if they would burst out of their sockets.

"Mein Gott ! mein Gott ! can it be possible that he at fourteen should have known, by mere instinct, as much, or perhaps more than what it has taken me whole years of deep study and experiment to acquire ? And even then it was almost by mere accident—if verily there is such a thing as mere accident in the system of nature and the consequences of human events—that I was fortunate enough to hit upon the clue of that great secret at last."

He began to pace up and down to the end of the room and back, like some wild animal. His gentle manners and even appearance were entirely changed. Suddenly he made a rush at me, and before I was aware of his aim and could duck out of harm's way, he had caught hold of me tight by the head, which he began fingering gingerly all round, while he glared into my eyes, just as if they were windows through which he could see inside to my brain.

"Pardon the liberty," he said, after having continued his manipulations (as when he had quite done with me I ventured to express a hope) entirely to his own satisfaction, for some ten minutes or so.

CHAPTER VI.

"'One good turn deserves another,' quoth the *Kabob,* when it burnt the cook's mouth."—Old Arabic Proverb.

"Pardon, I entreat, Mein Heer, the slight liberty which I have been taking with your head, of which allow me to remark that you have reason to be very proud; but I have just now from the account you have given me, and from the phrenological examination which you have so kindly permitted, at last discovered the cause and solution of a curious physical problem which has for some time greatly puzzled me.

"It must be now four or five months since I took an opportunity—indeed it was at his own particular request—of examining and analysing the phrenological organization of that very strange character of whom we have been speaking, Herr Gorles. Never in my experience have I before met with so singular a case where as exhibited from their original natural formation (much increased, of course, by their unrestricted exercise and indulgence as he has advanced in years),

the vicious propensities, such as *hatred, spiteful malice, dishonesty, innate love of lying,* and in short every other kind of wickedness to which humanity is most prone, so vastly preponderated; indeed I may say that, with one most unlooked-for exception, entirely monopolized the whole cerebral system.

"As to the better qualifications, the virtues (if you so like to designate them) which are usually to be found developed in such proportions as to counteract, if not entirely to control their antagonistic evil principles, they were, I declare to you, absolutely nil; but had dwindled away and perished entirely, if indeed they had ever existed; positively into nothing, with the sole exception to which I have alluded.

"I was, indeed, amazed to find the weight and intrinsic purity of genuine animal courage and daring, which I could at once without hesitation, from the very difference in its nature and kind, detect as an exotic which had evidently, though at that time to me quite unaccountably, become engrafted in a portion of the brain, as it were upon a nerve or root, to which it bore no natural affinity; but grown and spreading as it was, out of all proportion to the space in which it found itself, had in some of its ramifications so forced its way through some of the adjacent channels or organs, that, almost choking them up, it was

itself become distorted, and so affected those vicious propensities which I have described, as to render them tenfold worse than they had ever been originally.

"It is only now, in my examination of your mental development, that I discover from whence that extraneous quality in the brain of Gorles has been derived. Here I at once recognise the original root of that graft which had so much puzzled me, obtained, as you now inform me, by subtilty and stealth, which, having increased in scale and vigour proportionately to yourself, its original rightful possessor, has far outgrown the diminished space to which it had been thus unnaturally transferred.

"It will in the end probably bring about its own fearful retribution; either leading its unlawful possessor to his own destruction, in some reckless attempt of violence against antagonists whose superior physical size and strength are beyond any comparison with his own, or even into presumptuous intercourse with, or perhaps defiance of, more than mortal powers, which are, I need not tell you, not to be trifled with with impunity; or at any-rate, should he escape those dangers, as the whole of his cerebral system must in time become absorbed by that one preponderating principle, his intellectual and sensual organization thus unnaturally monopolized, will in time become

degenerated to exactly the state of any violent raving wild beast.

"Do not imagine that I am now wishing to offer you any mere common-place flattery (which, if you only knew me better, or as Von Lyons here will tell you, is not my usual wont), when I congratulate you, as, indeed, *Mein Heer*, I can most conscientiously do, upon having received from nature an extraordinary endowment of such courage, as neither in quality nor quantity (notwithstanding even the abstraction you have suffered) have I ever yet, in all my experience, seen anything like equalled, or even at all approached in any one individual.

"Pure courage is evidently your principal characteristic, moral as well as physical; but at the same time nature, ever provident, has given you not only a muscular frame, with bone and sinews all in full proportion, but, above all, she has not omitted a full balance of the necessary counteracting principles, *generosity, benevolence, good temper*, consideration for those who are weaker and smaller than yourself, though the latter may be perhaps alloyed with a little *disdain;* in short, your phrenological organization might in the aggregate be defined as very closely resembling, in all its finest qualities, that most noble specimen of creation, the pure Newfoundland dog, or

one of the mastiffs of the real Mount St. Bernard breed (excuse the comparison). I was just going to say the lion of the desert, which is, I know, more generally recognised as the most noble of animals, but undeservedly so; for though brave and sometimes generous, he still has enough of the feline taint about him to be often both cunning and ungrateful. In the otherwise almost perfect balance and formation of your natural mental development, I can discover only one symptom of unhealthy, not to say serious"——

What the Professor might have been going on to say, I cannot tell; for Master *Taraxacum*, who, notwithstanding his professed love of science and philosophy, had as I had observed been growing fidgetty, and was evidently tired of this analytical discourse, suddenly jumping up, gave that learned gentleman such an astounding slap on the back that it sent his spectacles and his pipe flying all across the room, and himself too, half way after them.

"Just missed him, by Jingo!" cried De Lyons, "such a banging great brute of a wasp—hornet, I should rather say—crawling up your back, my dear Professor! In another minute he would have been on to the nape of your neck."

"Verily," replied the Professor, "had he even arrived there I am not sure that it would have been

worse for me than your most thundering blow. A thousand thunders ! I say, but you have nearly knocked all the breath out of my body."

"Now, that is what I call a real development of base ingratitude. Next time I will be hanged if I won't let you be stung. They say that it only takes three brutes of that size to kill a horse."

"But have you killed it?"

"No," answered De Lyons, looking curiously into the palm of his hand, just as if he really expected to find a squashed hornet there; "the beast must have got away: flown out of the window, I dare say. Ah, there it is, I think, upon the vine on that opposite wall. Look here, Professor, can't you see it?" and he pointed with the stem of the Professor's own pipe, as he picked it up for him from off the floor, and with it beckoned his friend to the recess of the window.

I was not going to trouble myself to move out of my comfortable seat to look after hornets, in whose existence I never much believed, except in *Taraxacum's* own lively imagination. He must have suddenly remembered something very particular which he must have had to say to the Professor; for as they remained there, with their two heads together stretched out of the window, they were jabbering away together "hard all" in their High Dutch, far too fast for me to keep up

with or understand. I was sure there was something more than a hornet, either real or apocryphal, which could require so much earnest discussion and argument. By-and-bye De Lyons drew in his head, and as he turned round, said—

"Well, at any-rate, we can but ask him. Let us just put what we want fairly to himself, and so leave it to him to oblige us or not as he shall think best."

"Well, then, old fellow, just the long and the short of our palaver comes to this: the Professor says, and I, for the reasons I have already given you, can corroborate him fully, that if you really wish, as, of course, being a sensible fellow you do wish, to find yourself set all right again at once, and to be spared all the wear and tear of your own disappointed and damaged, or if you would rather, injured feelings, he's your man; so don't let them bother you any longer, which they will do, as he declares, for no end of a time unless you trust him to rid you of them; and far worse, too, than the ordinary average of men, because he says that your natural *fidelity* and tenacity of attachment are so extra superfine and strong that in this respect also he compares you to the most faithful of big dogs; I am not sure whether you will take that exactly as a compliment; but I know he really means it as such. Now just take my disinterested advice, jump at the

offer, and let him take it all right out of you. All he asks of you is for one very simple favour in return.

"You must remember of course my telling you some time since of a certain interview,—a most wonderful and interesting interview, which our learned friend here, having by a course of the most intense study and thought discovered the means of bringing about, has at last completed every requisite preparation, except for the want of one necessary principle.

"In that one respect he feels confident that it is in your power, if you only choose to do so, greatly to assist him.

"In short will you in return for his kindness oblige him by just sparing him, for a short time only, a portion of that courage and enormous strength of nerve of which, as he affirms, you have received from nature a supply sufficient for five or six ordinary individuals at least?"

I certainly now wonder that I did not feel more amazement, or at any rate disbelief, at this very extraordinary proposition thus plainly put.

The Professor had in the meantime sat himself down close by my side, without my much noticing him at first, until he laid his hand, as if accidentally, and very gently, upon the back of mine as it rested upon the arm of my chair. Then again I felt the

same strange sensation or thrill which I have before described run through me, not unpleasant, but much more distinctly than before.

Quite conscious that he was, by means of this pressure, soft as it was, exercising a powerful and direct influence over me, I yet felt neither fear nor doubt of his powers; on the contrary, now that the question had been thus fairly put to me, I at once determined to oblige them. Indeed I may say that an enthusiastic interest and a strong desire to participate in any risk which there might be in their intended scheme, took possession of my mind; and I expressed myself perfectly ready to afford every aid in my power by sharing such gifts as I might be blessed with in the way of extra nerves with these two queer geniuses.

Without yet fully making up my mind as to whether I would avail myself of the Professor's kind assistance in relieving me of my feelings of affection towards poor dear Katie, I only required to be satisfied on these two points: "In the first place, let me understand exactly what is your end and object in bringing about this interview, supposing that your anticipations in this respect are fully realized? and then I should also like to know, in regard to the spiritual operation which you propose to perform upon myself, what actual means do you put in force, or

what will be the immediate effect of those means in case of my consenting to submit myself to them?"

"One thing at a time," exclaimed the Professor, springing up in a state of delighted excitement. "I find then that you really know our object, and are willing to aid, and even wish to join us? You do not quail? Stop, let me lay my hand upon the pulsations of your heart. Bravo! my young friend; you shall indeed be with us in this affair, as you so much wish to be, if I can possibly manage it. As to our purpose and object in this great undertaking, believe me that they are indeed based upon none but the best and highest motives. But that I may be able more fully to satisfy your mind, and more perfectly explain myself, and at the same time, as it may tend to strengthen your attention and faith, which latter is a most essential requisite in all the abstruse and scientific studies of this nature, I will now, with the kind permission of our friend here, just avail myself, as a temporary loan only, of Von Lyons' faculty of speaking in his and your own native language, as there may be many intricacies and details which you will naturally be better able to take in if conveyed in plain English than in my own German tongue, with which I perceive that, although you tolerably understand it, you are not yet quite thoroughly conversant."

That was true enough; I could not always quite follow him when talking at his regular pace, though I could make out a good deal of it. Besides I was anxious to witness so strange a proof of his powers.

"Oh, bother!" cried De Lyons, rather unwillingly assenting to the proposed arrangement; "if you really want it, I suppose you must have your own way; but don't you go playing a fellow any of your tricks, and forget to return my 'gift of the gab' to me when you have done with it. It would be such an awful sell to have to set to work to learn one's own lingo all from the beginning again at my time of life; the hardest to pick up of all the tongues in Christendom, if one is to judge from the hash you *Mein Heers* and *Mossoos* make of it. However, if you will promise, honour bright and bar all tricks, I don't mind accommodating you for half an hour or so, as a special favour."

CHAPTER VII.

A STRANGE USE OF A STRANGE TONGUE.

The Professor and De Lyons without further preliminary, took their places opposite to one another, and holding by both their hands, stood for some seconds staring fixedly into each other's eyes. Their faces drew closer and closer, until I really thought that they were going to kiss, (those German beggars think nothing, as of course you know, of kissing one another); but instead of that, the former distinctly inhaled a deep breath from the other's nostrils, and then *Taraxacum* fell back as if sound asleep upon the couch behind him.

When the Professor turned round and addressed me I positively thought that it was *Taraxacum* who spoke: the very voice, the manner, the familiar slang expressions, were all his exactly, coming forth from those revered lips as naturally as if they had prattled in pure English from the cradle. It had the most absurd effect conceivable. I was amused, but not surprised. I had

been so strongly imbued with the influence of the Professor, that I much doubt whether anything would have surprised me.

"Now, then," he said, sharply, "fire away, old chap; and anything you want to know, out with it, and depend upon it I will put you up to the dodge, if I can. You seem already to have had the office as to what we are up to, and who it is whom we want to pay us a visit. That chattering fellow, Von Lyons there, who is a deuced good young fellow, but with no more discretion than an ape, has, I see, let you into so much of the secret; for secret it really is, and ought to be, from the generality of the world;—these are not matters, you twig, to be bandied about by everybody."

"But must there not be," I inquired, "considerable danger and risk in this undertaking, even supposing that you have, as you seem so confidently to feel, really discovered the means and power of carrying out your intention?"

"Deuce a bit!" he replied, just in De Lyons' own off-hand tone, "provided the two essential necessaries don't fail us: *Faith* in the means we are going to use, and *Pluck* to go through with them as soon as we see those same means beginning to work successfully.

"Does your faith waver?" He took me again by

the hand, and there was an earnest almost sublime expression in his anything but handsome countenance which, as I looked at him, made me feel, I know not why, that I could trust and believe in the truth and powers of that strange man to any length, far beyond any limits of ordinary common sense or reason.

"All right, old fellow," he said, after a pause; "and as to your pluck and nerve, you have, as I have told you, enough and to spare for all three of us put together."

"But granted that we have the requisite supply of faith and nerve, you have not yet told me what is the advantage to be gained; I should certainly like to be satisfied as to the exact use, the end, the object you have in view, which you have pronounced to be so great and so good.

"Object, indeed! object enough I should think," testily replied the Professor, "if we, through means, which only are to be attained by whole years of deep study and scientific preparation, can summon before us one of the most potent spirits of another sphere of the creation to come at our bidding: and thus being under our orders, to be brought to an equality, or even under subjection to ourselves; do you call that nothing? That first step once accomplished, as it certainly can, and shortly shall be, to what results

may it not lead : from equality, as I say, may we not look to advancing to superiority ? And then what unbounded advantages for the good of mankind may we not attain to if we can only control, perhaps altogether subdue and crush down the power which since the beginning of the world has played such mischief and brought so much misery on mankind ?

" And why has he been able to do so ? Because mankind has always feared him, yielded unresistingly to him, and never had the pluck to meet him face to face, and go boldly in at him.

" If, as I verily believe, I have really got hold of the right secret for bringing old——(it is not lucky or polite always to mention names)—to the front, face to face, as long as our motives are all right—and what can be better than the universal benefit of our fellow-creatures ?—what have we to fear, or where is the risk ? Like all other unknown and untried sources of terror, as any fellows of our time of life must have found to be more or less the case in all supposed dangers, when actually faced, this undertaking will not prove half so great or so hard as one would have anticipated. Then consider the intense pleasure and value of the actual possession of such a secret, unknown as I believe it to be to any other living mortal ! Not that I mean to say it has never been known before ; for the same

secret has been discovered and put into practice by various learned old codgers—(that epithet for individuals of a certain age and respectability was rather a favourite one of De Lyons, and fell pat from the Professor, without his appearing to be the least aware of its absurd incongruity with the subject of his discourse)—the same secret has been put in practice, I tell you, over and over again, through successive ages, from the very earliest times. Bless your heart! you may read all about it, if you only know how, in the most ancient Egyptian hieroglyphics, long before the times of even Moses himself, or even Joseph. It was certainly known among the Jews, though it was but rarely that any of them dared put their knowledge in practice, strictly forbidden as anything of the sort was by their laws, and with the danger of being pelted to death with brickbats for their pains, if caught at any such little games.

"What was really, do you suppose, the nature of the famous oracles of Delphi, in the palmy days of the Greeks?—or whence came the prophetic powers of the augurs or sybils among the Romans? It is all very well for the shallow-headed, self-satisfied wiseacres of these days to put them all down as humbugs and impostors; but how was it that the Greeks, who, ancient as well as modern, have always been the

keenest, most quickwitted rascals on the face of the earth, or those stern, soundly sensible old Romans, were such fools and childish idiots as to put their trust in, and on the most important occasions constantly act, as they undoubtedly did, upon the counsels and supernatural warnings which they received from the sources to which I have alluded, if they were in fact only the miserable quibbles and shuffling *doubles entendres* which our modern numskull historians would try to make us believe ?

"From the earliest ages the secret of holding personal communication with beings of another world has never been entirely lost. The fact of such a power existing has of course always remained the same, and always will to the end of time, though there has not always been a succession of persons who have possessed the secret of making use of that power. I myself believe in the theory, which I received from a learned old Egyptian named Bune Fossletif, under whom I once studied science on the banks of the Nile. He held that by some special though natural organization of the human mind, this secret was always prevented from being imparted from one individual to another. He did not pretend to explain why or how it should be so ; but his experience had certainly taught him that such was the case, and consequently that

every individual was obliged in successive generations to seek out and acquire the knowledge of these mysteries fresh for himself, though, of course, any one who is up to the fact of the existence of such secrets, or whose mind has been at all trained or biased in that direction, is more likely to hit upon them than any chance guesser would be. Do you not in England respect the memory and renown of your own great English *savant*, of whom we think a good deal here in Germany, the celebrated Friar Bacon? In his own day he was accused of practising magic and consorting with supernatural associates from another world. Well, perhaps he did. There is no denying that he was some centuries ahead of his age in chemical and other philosophical science and knowledge.

"The story of Faust is perhaps not altogether quite such a myth as the self-satisfied literary swells of now-a-days will tell you. To come down much later—what think you of the powers of the famous Cagliostro in France? and he was but one of the many deep thinkers and extraordinary geniuses of that age of extraordinary geniuses who devoted themselves to the pursuit of the great truths and powers we have been discussing. The pursuit and indeed the possession of those great powers were becoming indeed too common and generally diffused; they were in fact most fearfully

abused and misused; and such tremendous powers when misused are apt to produce consequences which are, and were at that time, awful in the extreme.

"I refer, of course, to the great French Revolution, when so many strange spirits and powers had been wantonly summoned, and let go free to spread themselves abroad—but that is too deep a subject for us to go into now. Who and what these spirits, and what the secret means of controlling and summoning them, actually may be, I am not at liberty to tell you; I could not do so, as I have just said, even if I wished.

"But if in spite of disinterested advice you are really, as you say, still so very desirous of assisting at the personal interview which I am contemplating—as your presence will be of the greatest advantage in carrying us through with it—join us by all means."

"I say!" grumbled out De Lyons, in German—rolling up from the sofa on which he had been sprawling at full length—"haven't you two worthy gentlemen nearly finished your discourse? I daresay you think I have been sound asleep all this time; but I have been only lying quiet—trying to make out what you have been talking about with such amazing volubility—without, however, being able to understand two words consecutively. I assure you, my respected friends, that you both—but Mynheer Pro-

fessor particularly—have been discoursing at that astounding pace, that my very ears tingle again with the vibration they have undergone—but now, if it is all the same to you, I will trouble you to return me my faculty for speaking and understanding my native English. I had no idea what a bore it was to have to be so long in company without being able to put in a word: the fact is, it is quite a new sensation to me, and a very unpleasant one."

"Pray be so obliging as to grant us only another five minutes, dear friend," the Professor pleaded in his own language, and with his own courteous manner, "and I will lose no time in serving this gentleman—if he really wishes me to do so—by relieving him of those feelings and passions which are now affecting and inconveniencing his peace of mind."

"Well, just let me fairly know what you are going at," I said; "and tell me, are these faculties in any way palpable to the senses—or how shall I know whether they are actually removed or not?"

"Oh, Jupiter! what an unbelieving sinner you must be!" broke out the Professor, in the purest *Taraxaconian* idiom—"and that, too, after what I have just done with that other fellow's 'gift of the gab,' before your very nose!"

"It is not that I disbelieve or doubt you," I replied,

"but I want to know beforehand what the immediate effect will be upon myself. Is it only upon my fancy, or mind, that you act?—so that I shall no longer dwell upon or care for the same subjects which are now harassing me; or do you verily and indeed remove any palpable material or essence which, like air or gas, can be made amenable to any of our senses? Can one smell it, like gas?—or hear and feel it, like the wind?—or taste it, like an essence?"

The Professor stooped down, and impatiently tugging out his boot-lace, lighted one end of it at his pipe.

"Look here," he said, "at this spark! if let alone it would burn slowly for hours—for days, if there were length enough—till the whole shoe-lace was consumed. I wet my finger and thumb thus (perhaps there may have been a time in past ages of the world, before general experience had shown that fire could thus easily be annihilated, when the first discoverers of so simple a fact were denounced as impious, and presuming against Providence, who had made the element with all the tremendous power which it has; but never mind that now)—I pinch the spark with my moistened fingers, and where is it? The shoe-lace is no longer consumed; but as to the spark itself, we only know that it is no longer in

existence. If by means which are in my power, I can thus extinguish ("cure you of," is the commonly received term) a fever—you cannot see, or smell, or touch a fever—but you very soon know, without there being any fancy about it, whether the disease has left you or not: one day it is racking and burning through your limbs, your nerves, and your whole system; the very next it may be subdued, eradicated, and all those racking pains and symptoms have ceased; and just what fever is to the body, so is what is vulgarly called love to the mind—indeed, the one by sympathy not unfrequently produces the other, for that matter.

"There is one peculiarity, however, in this particular affection (there is the very identical right term for you, and in its true and original sense)—what men call love is indeed an affection, that is, a species of disease or development, which affects the human species in a manner to which no other vital principle that I am aware of bears any analogy.

"The peculiarity of this affection is, that to be developed in perfection it must be shared and divided between two individuals, of the opposite sexes of course, though somehow it is hardly ever distributed exactly equally between the two; but always seems by some special provision of nature to be so arranged

that as it increases in the one person it decreases exactly in proportion in the other counterpart, and so *vice versâ*.

"That there is something in this theory though it may seem strange and unaccountable, every one who has ever seen any couple in the state which is known as being in love, or has himself suffered under that tiresome disorder, must have observed or experienced. As one cares more and becomes more ardent in displaying the symptoms of affection, the other cares less, and grows cooler in reciprocating those feelings. The more steady, that is the less fluctuating affections, produce the greatest degree of happiness; but if from caprice, or whim, or any other cause they are tossed about from one to another, and end in all preponderating on one side, the greatest mental wretchedness is the consequence. What is more miserable and deplorable than when the affections become, as the story-books call them, hopelessly unrequited, that is when either man or woman have to bear the whole allotment by themselves alone? The simple physical reason of which suffering is, that it is contrary to one of the first principles of nature, that that which ought, if acting properly, to sympathetically affect two persons at once, should entirely accrue to, and overwhelm any single individual.

"But in your own particular case, my dear Mr. Lambard, were I to undertake to relieve you at once and entirely from the effects of your affections in their present active state, I should of course only have the power of doing so over whatever quantity of affections may just now happen to lie to your own share—that I should soon ascertain by examining that particular organ in your head; but I must at the same time fairly warn you what the consequences may be to the fair lady who shares those affections.

"As I could only control that moiety which I find in yourself, just as much as I should be able to remove from your system, would by the force of magnetic attraction immediately reunite itself with its corresponding portion in your counterpart; and thus of whatever amount of pain or inconvenience I may have relieved you, just so much would accrue to her: so that the young lady would have to bear not only her own share of troubles and feelings, of longing and suspense, but all yours on the top of them into the bargain."

Could he imagine that any fellow could for a moment be so grossly selfish as to thus escape from pain, however wearing, at the expense of her whom I really cared for so tenderly and sincerely? Why, I would have sacrificed myself, body and soul, to have

saved the darling girl from an ache in her little finger. Of course I most emphatically declined his assistance on those terms, though I thanked him for his kind intentions towards myself individually all the same.

"Now, then!" sung out De Lyons, impatiently, "time is fairly up. Come, Professor, render back my knowledge of English to me without further delay, or my tongue will soon grow dry in my mouth." And by exactly the same process as he had used in borrowing it, the Professor thus adjured returned our friend the full and perfect possession of his mother tongue.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN FOR IT.

"Do you know what time it is? Within a few minutes of to-morrow, I can tell you," said *Taraxacum* in his own vernacular, "and I'm blessed if my tongue doesn't feel quite stiff for want of exercise, and my poor ears quite ache with trying to make out what you two fellows have been jabbering about all this time."

"Why didn't you ask us in German?" said the Professor; "your tongue runs equally glibly in that."

"What was the use of that? While you two kept up that rattle, one couldn't distinguish between the words even, they all seemed to run so one into the other. But now, are you going to help Frank here, and set his shattered feelings all straight again for him?"

"He wishes to postpone it," replied the Professor, evasively, "until after the more important business for which he is so kind as to place his superior gifts of nature at our service. It may be that in the course of that very experiment we may obtain some valuable

hints or suggestions in regard to those matters which more particularly interest your friend as an individual.

"But for our main object, why not try it now? I have long had all my preparations made; everything has been ready and arranged with the one exception of a sufficient supply of the requisite strength of nerve,—courage, if you will, to feel that we could confidently rely upon going boldly through with it. Now, however, we have but to put ourselves *en rapport* with this noble heart, and with such a quality diffused and shared for the time equally among our three systems blended in unison, there is no power we shall not dare face, no danger we need fear."

"No time like the present; but where is it to be, then?" replied De Lyons. "You don't want to have him here in my room, do you? It is scarcely a fit place for a stranger."

"A stranger, indeed! Do you suppose that he is a stranger, or not equally quite at home anywhere?"

"Ah, but shall not you want your things, some of your paraphernalia to be at hand; your crystal, for instance, some of your phials, perhaps, or mystical preparations? And it will be scarcely safe without having your own notes and manuscripts by you, to consult in case of your memory slipping you, or any form going wrong."

"We can anyhow commence some of the preliminaries here, and afterwards, if it is necessary, adjourn home to my own chamber, when we ourselves are quite prepared."

I fancied I saw a lurking grin on the Professor's face, as he evidently read De Lyons' thoughts, who now the moment was actually come seemed waxing slightly nervous at the idea of his own room being made the scene of the promised interview. The Professor certainly smiled grimly as his eye caught mine; but then changing to the most solemn demeanour, in a low but very earnest voice he asked me, "Do you then really of your own free will, desire to join and aid us in summoning, and obtaining a personal interview with one of the most powerful denizens of the spirit world? Do you feel that you can dare to stand face to face, without showing any signs of fear, before one of the chief princes of the air, if he should be brought before us in a visible form? And have you faith enough in my science, and powers thereby acquired, to believe without doubting that I can bring about this interview? And, finally, will you allow your friend Von Lyons and myself to partake in, and for a time absorb from your system into ours a certain share of your strength of nerves, in order that we thus may conjointly and unitedly have, and be able to show

courage sufficient to carry us through our undertaking without the chance of any fear, or weak faltering in our purpose ?"

I placed my hand firmly in his, and declared myself, as I sincerely felt, fully prepared to go through anything with him. The Professor stood for some minutes looking steadfastly, as I might I am sure describe it, right through and through me—seemed satisfied, and signed to me to take my seat in a chair he had placed in the middle of the room; then placing himself in front of me, he held me by my two thumbs, gently pressed together in his left hand—while with the right, with only the first and little finger sticking out straight, he began making slow passes, now nearer, and then again further from my eyes; all the while with his own two protruding goggles fixed with a steady glare upon mine. As he thus held me, I could distinctly feel, as it were, a thin stream of liquid fire pouring up my two arms, and diffusing itself through my whole body: it was not an unpleasant sensation by any means.

He then, without moving his eyes from mine, spoke in an undertone to De Lyons, and desired him to come and place his thumb upon a particular spot on my head; he himself, at the same time, doing likewise with his disengaged hand. I could instantly

feel the same warm fluctuating stream—or, perhaps, thread would convey the idea better—as if it were pouring out of the organ to which they both thus held their thumbs steadily but gently pressed.

I think that perhaps—for only just one moment—a half-formed thought passed through my mind, whether it was not foolhardy and rash of me thus, unsupported and alone, to have put myself in the power of these two queer characters, and ever to have assented to join them in their supernatural or, for all I knew, desperately wicked undertakings.

However, that it was too late now to go back was my almost last distinct idea—though I fancy that I felt my heart quail within me—as the Professor, having disengaged both his hands, was passing them at a much quicker rate up and down in front of my face, and then gradually down almost to my very feet.

All this while I had, as he had desired me before he began, kept my eyes wide open, steadily staring into his; but my efforts were now in vain, my eyelids would close—I could hold them open no longer—and I dropped off, as I should have said, for perhaps a minute, certainly not two—but when I opened them again, I did not know where I was—the whole scene was entirely changed.

I suppose it may have taken me a few minutes

to recover my surprise, and to collect my scattered thoughts—just as it does if one is awakened suddenly from a very deep sleep; but as soon as I was come again fully to my senses, I found that my two companions — the Professor and De Lyons— were still with me, but that I had moved, and so had they, to opposite sides of the room. But what room could it be?—where on earth had we got to? I could not make out. I was certain of one thing, that it was nowhere that I had ever been before.

De Lyons' lodging, in which we had been spending the evening, was a rather lofty square room, with a bay-window at the end, looking into a back court, with no special attempt at ornament, or distinction of any sort about it from any other German room, except, I remember, a kind of mahogany shelf or rack, on which was arranged a long row of china pipe-bowls, decorated with the portraits of lovely and highly-coloured damsels, each in a more or less state of *déshabille*. But now, on looking round, I found myself in a low though well-sized garret, as I could see that it must be, by the sloping form of the ceiling and the chimney pots and roof tiles, which were all round on the level with the uncurtained window, close to which I was standing.

It was a gloriously bright midsummer night, with a full moon shining nearly as clear as day, and it was by that view outside that I suddenly recognised where I really was. Yes, I felt that of course it must be so: why hadn't I known it instantly?

The place I thus found myself in answered in every respect to the vivid description given to me by the boy Ferdy: those young ones always see things and can somehow describe them more accurately than one does as one grows older.

Of course, I say, there hung the piece of handsome old tapestry which he, by the way, described as a carpet, stretched over the door; the curious dark old cabinet, the old-fashioned armed chair, the lamp hanging in the centre; and, sure enough, in the middle of the table stood the large globe of pure crystal.

We had come—how I cannot pretend to say, nor at the time seemed to care, or wonder—to the sanctum, the private retreat of the mysterious Professor.

De Lyons was certainly quite right in asserting that this quaintly furnished chamber was much better adapted for an interview with a stranger from below, than his own would have been.

CHAPTER IX.

A QUESTIONABLE STRANGER.

The Professor was by this time bending at times earnestly over the crystal, as if in its depths he could discover and read the queer characters which he, from time to time, turned to write down on a long slip of parchment, spread all across the table, at his right hand. What he was writing seemed to be more like hieroglyphics rather than the letters of any recognised language. All of a sudden it struck me as remarkable, that though I was right away in the further corner of the room, I could see and read those same figures distinctly, and understand them too, at the instant as I did so, though the meaning seemed to pass away from my mind, as the lines passed away from my vision: my eye-sight is naturally strong, but I certainly never was able to see clearly at that same distance either before or since.

De Lyons stood by, occasionally helping to shift the parchment, all his nervousness seeming entirely to

have left him; he appeared as cool and interested as possible.

"Now, then, all is ready," said the Professor in a low suppressed tone of voice, having at length come to the end of his writing, and turning his spectacles upon De Lyons. "We must now all three unite in pronouncing the solemn invocation distinctly and without mistake or hesitation."

"How can we? I, for my part, have not the least idea what to say, or even how to begin," replied his companion, though he too spoke in a much quieter tone and manner than usual.

"Take this hand firmly in thine own," said the Professor severely, and making a gesture towards me to approach, he held out his other to myself. I moved towards him; but in doing so I felt as if I were floating instead of walking as I meant to do; there was not the slightest sound of my step, or any movement, though I seemed to go straight without displacing or in any way touching a large heavy chair which was standing right in the way between us.

The Professor placed himself in the middle between us, holding me tightly by the hand on one side and De Lyons on the other; we each rested our other unoccupied hand, by his desire, upon the crystal ball which stood on a block or low pedestal covered with

black velvet on the table before us. We then all three at once, without the slightest intimation or word between ourselves on the subject, spontaneously broke out with a solemn form of adjuration and invocation in Latin pronounced in a slow solemn tone. The words came perfectly naturally and glibly to my lips without the slightest mental effort on my own part, just as if I had repeated them all my life, and at the same time I was conscious of my understanding it all as I sung it out; but the instant I let go of the Professor's hand it all passed out of my memory completely.

We felt—I say *we*, because I knew exactly what De Lyons was feeling and thinking just as well as I did myself—we felt and knew, though the Professor had made no sign nor told us so, that at the third time of chaunting through the Latin invocation the spirit would be bound to appear before us; but the Professor himself, and consequently we, could form no exact idea how and in what shape he would make his entry. As we uttered the last syllable of the sentence for the third time a brilliant flash of lightning made us all shut our eyes involuntarily, and when we opened them again there in the old oak chair sat a most pleasant gentlemanly looking person, smiling as somehow people with such beautifully regular white teeth as he had, always do manage to smile.

So far from there being anything repulsive or terrible in the outward appearance of the—what shall I call him?—Personage who thus appeared in answer to our solemn invocation, there was something peculiarly attractive and taking about him. His light hair was in short crispy curls all over the top of his head, his smiling eyes were decidedly at first a bright blue, but they, like the rest of his features, which were wonderfully regular, were continually and totally changing, but always handsome, and preserving, through all these changes, the purest types of classical beauty. At each fresh change I felt sure that I had often seen the same face before, either in some club window in London, or in the streets, or at some theatre it may, perhaps, have been, or on a race course, I could not pretend to say where exactly, but the features were certainly quite familiar to my mind.

It is difficult to describe how he was dressed. A sort of long garment of some soft flexible material, light silk or nankeen, almost flesh-coloured, it seemed not so much to be thrown over as to grow from and be part of his well-shaped shoulders, covering him in graceful folds quite down to the ancles. He smiled most affably upon us each, and gently bowed his head with an air of quiet encouragement.

Notwithstanding the supply of courage upon

which they had been flattering me in such strong terms, I must confess I felt a qualm come over me, and I knew that my companions shared this as well as all other feelings in common.

The Professor's voice trembled so that he could hardly articulate, and it required a strong mental effort to keep our pluck up to the mark.

But it was only for a minute: collecting himself, he went on with a form of address which he had written in preparation on the parchment before him, and in a firm solemn voice thus opened his address:

"O Spirituum potentissime! omnium scientiarum hujus mundi parens ter inclytissime, æris Princeps schemis infinitis profundissime!"——

"Ah! thank you—that will do," said the Stranger, cutting short this ceremonious commencement with a slightly satirical smile, but a well-bred waive of the hand. "You will excuse me, gentlemen, I am sure, but I have very little time to spare. I happen to have a great deal on hand just at present; so having thus summoned me, if you will only kindly tell me, in as few words as possible, what it is that I can specially do for you, I am sure I shall be only too happy to serve you in any way reasonably within my powers: so, pray tell me, what is it?"

The Professor had dropped his grasp on our hands, and we were no longer touching the crystal, so that, left to myself, I for my part had no idea, now that he had thus succeeded in his ardent desire of summoning this spirit of darkness to appear before us *in propriâ personâ*, what the Professor did want with him, though I naturally supposed it must be something very particular. As for myself, I was perfectly satisfied with having actually seen *Him* whom one has from one's earliest days always so much and so often talked about. My only wish was now that he would take himself off again as quickly as possible, without doing us any personal mischief. Not that I felt a bit afraid, except perhaps just at the first shock; after that, all feelings seemed deadened and numbed within me.

Nobody answered a word.

After a pause the Stranger—whom, as you may perceive, I even now particularly avoid calling by the name more familiar to all of us, having been specially warned by the Professor on that subject; although I suppose, if not actually that great person himself, it was one of the principal members of his family—the Stranger repeated his inquiry.

"Well, my masters," he said, "I suppose you can inform me, now that you have thus sum-

moned me, what it is that you want me to do for you?"

We only looked hopelessly at one another. I began to think that neither of my companions had the least made up their minds as to what they actually wanted and would ask for, a bit more than I had myself.

"Well, my dear sirs, this is trifling with me—this is insulting!" and the charming countenance began to change to a very different expression. "Do you think that in these busy times, I have nothing better to do than to be at the beck and call of three idle *gobemouches* like yourselves? Ah! I see you tremble," he said, suddenly, "and you shall have some reason to do so, at the lesson I will now give you for your impudent presumption!" He had risen from his seat, and was advancing towards us quite noiselessly, with exactly the motion of a cat about to spring. In less than the wink of an eye we all three had each other by the hands again, and were grasping the crystal ball.

"You lie, you rascal!" we all shouted at him, simultaneously; "we do not tremble, and we defy you!"

His manner was changed instantly.

"Bravo, bravo!" he cried, in his original concili-

ating voice; "I did but try you, and you have all stood it nobly."

"Go back to your place," we all shouted again; "we tell you we defy you!"

There certainly was for a moment a hang-dog look about our visitor as, like a thwarted bully, he seemed bound to obey our orders: and, though evidently unwillingly, he took a backward stride to his chair.

"Well, what do you want with me?—what can I do for you?" he asked in a more subdued voice returning to his first conciliatory tone. "You have the command of me—for the time at least," he added, with a significant stress. "I am, I suppose, bound to do anything for you which lies in my power; and it would puzzle cleverer fellows than you are, I flatter myself, to hit upon anything that is not."

"You lie again!" we all answered together; "there is one thing, at any rate, we know you cannot do."

"What may that be, pray?"

"Speak a word of truth if you try."

He grinned as if rather flattered; certainly he seemed amused, as if acknowledging that we had him there.

"Well, there is no use being personal," he answered; "but it was not to tell me that, that you

have been at such pains to get me here, I suppose? But as, perhaps, you are prepared to believe nothing that I may tell you, would either one of you like a peep into the future? You will trust your own eyes, at any rate. Only let me know what, or who it shall be? And, pray, remember that I have no time to lose."

"Show us," said the Professor, in a firm voice, "the persons who are destined to influence each of us most in this life—our counterparts, sympathetic and antipathic; and then we shall also desire to see each his last closing scene in this world; the exact manner of his own death, whenever it may be fated to come, in fact."

"One thing at a time, my friends. As to the first part of your request, you have, I perceive, adopted that theory of all living beings having been sent into the world in pairs; and you are not far wrong either, though it really is notable how very often it happens that the sympathetic and antipathic never even once encounter each other, or are even aware of the other's existence in the course of their careers.

"But look, Professor, look!"

CHAPTER X.

"Oh wonderful, when devils tell the truth."

Richard III., Act i., Scene 2.

The room had until now, as I think I have mentioned, been lighted by a shaded lamp hung from the centre of the ceiling. The Stranger, as he spoke, made a flap at it with one of the long folds of his skin cloak, and without touching it caused the flame to flicker up, and then go out entirely with a smell.

The moon was, however, shining full into the room right upon a large blank space of the wall beyond where he was standing, so that it was bright and clear as a looking-glass. An ordinary person would have thrown a strong shadow upon the place, but of this extraordinary one there was not the slightest trace of anything of the sort. That fact, however, I do not think, struck us; or, at any rate, did not surprise us at all at the time.

"Look, my friend," said the Party, in an affected, half-mocking drawl, as with a waive of his hand he drew the special attention of the Professor to the

bright place on the wall; and there, as he spoke, appeared in bold relief the figure of a tall, very dark, handsome, voluptuous-looking female, gorgeously dressed, perhaps rather past the best prime of her beauty. She was laughing to herself fiercely, as she seemed to utter some hasty words, though there was no sound, as she finished reading a letter she had in her hand, and then tore it into a thousand pieces, and stamped them under her foot.

"Have you ever known a Signora at all resembling this?" inquired our visitor, with a mocking bow.

The Professor's and all of our hearts beat, not with trepidation, but roused anger, as we felt that he recognised one whom he loathed to bitterness; though at the same time the attraction towards her always had been, and would be again, should he ever meet her, irresistible in spite of himself. To her, and to her treatment of him, he felt—we all felt—that he owed all the misery of many past years of his life.

Taraxacum, I was at the same time conscious, was, as an individual, so surprised, not at the apparition, but at thus discovering this hitherto unsuspected episode in the Professor's private history, that with his usual familiarity and impudence he burst into loud guffaw of laughter, and was as near as possible

breaking our magnetic chain of hands in an almost uncontrollable impulse to nudge the Professor himself, or else me, if he could have got round to do so, facetiously in the ribs.

The Professor, of course, was aware of the same strong impulse, for he tightened his grip upon our hands, and in a stern voice said—

"Enough! let me now see where, and under what circumstances, death will overtake me!"

The handsome apartment in which we had seen the gay lady changed in an instant to a plain white-washed, small chamber, or rather cell, the only furniture of which seemed to be a clumsy wooden bedstead,covered by a miserable half-worn straw palliasse; on the palliasse lay stretched an emaciated figure in the coarse brown dress of a monk, with a rope round his waist. He was to all appearance quite like a regular monk, for we could see the shaven top of his head, and he seemed to be in either great mental or bodily agony; and as he writhed and turned upon his wretched bed, we recognised his face distinctly.

It was the Professor himself, there could be no doubt about it; for though the thick locks were gone, and the matted remains of hair at the back of the poll were grizzly and grey, there was no mistaking

those fiery eyes; and his other features, though now wrinkled and emaciated, were the same.

Although we could hear nothing, we could evidently see that he was calling out, and then in vain listening for the footsteps of some one who might come to help him. Having thus called again and again, we saw that he tried to raise himself from his couch, but had not the strength to do so; with one last desperate effort he put his feet upon the ground, and for one moment stood erect. But it was only for one moment; the effort had been too much for him—he staggered and fell back apparently lifeless across the couch, knocking down the solitary lamp, with which the cell was dimly lighted, in his fall. It was an awfully impressive scene; and while we stood looking at it aghast, even the Stranger seemed struck seriously by it, for he shook his head slowly as he contemplated it; and then turned to the Professor to see how he seemed to like the peep into futurity.

"A very likely fate, indeed," was the defiant thought which shot through the mind of the Professor; "not much fear of that for me. The lying demon is trying to frighten me."

"Now," said De Lyons, "show us if you can who it is that I love best in the world?"

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when

there appeared an exact representation of himself, with his favourite china pipe in his mouth—the identical one, as we could see by the picture on it, which he had been smoking that very evening in his own room.

"You be blistered!" said *Taraxacum*, boldly, "and don't let us have any of your impudence."

Our visitor laughed uproariously, and looked quite benignly upon the forward youth, with the same kind expression in his eyes towards him as I have already mentioned as noticing in the Professor, when *Taraxacum* treated him sometimes with his cool familiarity.

"But now," said the latter, "let us see my greatest enemy. I should like to know who he is."

The last vision was flapped out as he spoke; but lo! there was *Taraxacum* himself again, only not in quite the same costume as before. Half undressed, he was reclining with one leg thrown over the arm of his chair, and, to judge by his general appearance, rather more than less in a state of liquor.

De Lyons was furious, and the Party laughed again with the most thorough good humour, as if he enjoyed the joke intensely.

"Gammon!" said De Lyons, sulkily. "But now let us see in what manner my death is to be."

The scene that now rose before us was totally different from what had gone before. We seemed to be on some great height, from which a vast panorama of a wild and very beautiful country stretched away to an infinite distance below us. Thousands of figures, indistinct at first, were flitting and stirring in all directions; guns were flashing—though there was not the least sound—riderless horses rushing madly about, trampling over the carcases of men, which we now saw were strewed in all directions. It was some tremendous battle; there could be no doubt about that—a siege—a regular assault; line after line working their way up against huge earthworks. See how they are repulsed and beaten back, falling by thousands, but as they fall their places are filled by others, who rush on unflinchingly to the same fate. Bravo, how glorious to witness! But of what nation are those men? They are not Germans—at least, there are neither the white coats of the Austrians, nor the blue of the Prussians—they are not the soldiers of this country of Saxony; no fear of them marching up thus manfully to be ploughed down by whole lines and columns at a time; there are no red-coated English, or plaided Highlanders amongst them; the uniforms are more like the French, but the men themselves have not much of that type about them,

they seemed tall, gaunt-limbed, with yellow hair and beards. Now again more regiments come pouring on, but only to be beaten back again as those before them have been. Now see, they are turning; in another moment their ranks will be broken in confusion—no, no! look at that gallant young fellow, cap in hand; how he cheers them to the advance! He has snatched the colours from a staggering sergeant's hand; he waves them as he rallies his men in front. What colours are they?—surely not—white with red stripes, and a lot of stars on a blue ground in one corner—yes, it must be so; the Yankees, by all that is wonderful! But who can they be fighting against? why they have not as many men in their whole army, militia included, as there are regiments here. And where can this awful war be going on? Are the Americans about to invade any of the old-established countries of Europe? or has Europe combined to send so many thousands over to America? These are but lying visions of what is never to be, and utter impossibilities!

The Party, who all this time seemed himself even more interested than we were, and in a state of the most intense enjoyment at the scene before us, rubbing his hands, and grinning with delight, suddenly pointed with his finger to the gallant fellow we

had already noticed with the colours. A bullet had evidently struck him in the breast just as the Party points exultingly at him. He sprang upwards, and, flinging out his arms, fell with the colours, which he kept still convulsively clutched in his grasp.

As he went down, we knew intuitively that the gallant hero was De Lyons himself, in another minute to be trampled out of all further recognition under the heels of friends and foes, as they in turn held or lost the hardly-contested ground.

"If I am to live till I am killed fighting battles among the most peaceable and most money-loving republicans in the world, there is not much fear for me just yet," was the thought that passed through De Lyons', and so all of our minds. "Why he loves lies so much, he goes out of his way to find them, and invent facts which never can come to pass."

"And now will the other gentleman, whose acquaintance I am proud to make," said the strange Party, turning with a low bow towards myself, still with the same exceeding politeness, but perhaps just a slight dash of satirical malice in his tone and manner, "have a peep at the last page beforehand? Or is there by chance any person, any charming young lady, for instance, whom he might like to see, or to

ascertain what she was doing, or thinking about at this moment?"

I should have liked to have had a glimpse, if only for a bare instant, of my poor dear Katie, but the very wish, under such circumstances, seemed downright profanation. "Show me the little wretch," I said, "who has wronged me, and done me evil since my earliest days; and if I can see a vision of myself in future wreaking my utter vengeance upon him, I shall be all the better pleased; and firmly trust that you have shown us the truth, at least for once in a way."

He had put his head on one side as I spoke, as if not quite for the moment understanding me.

"Ah, to be sure," seeming to recollect suddenly. "What was I thinking of? Of course you shall. Would you like him to come in himself *in propriâ personâ?* The fact is, I have been expecting him here the whole of this time."

As he spoke, we heard footsteps outside, the tapestry over the door was pushed back, and in walked Gorles himself. I had never set eyes upon him, you remember, since that 4th of June, when he had come down again to Eton after having left just six years before. He was hardly, if at all, altered; his face was perhaps a little browner, and he had a few sprouting

hairs upon his chin, and an apology for a moustache on his upper lip, very much like a worn-down tooth-brush : that was *Taraxacum's* mental simile.

The Professor, I suppose, was instantly aware of my desire to rush at and throttle him, for he gripped me more tightly than ever by the hand ; and then the more prudent second thought shot through my mind of waiting to see what would turn up.

Gorles stopped short at the door, and looked astonished, thunderstruck ; but whether at thus finding himself face to face with me, or that seeing us standing, as we were, in the bright moonlight, he at a glance divined what we were about, I cannot say.

That probably was it, though ; for he turned sharp round as if he quite expected to see our visitor, who was standing there bowing, smirking, and looking quite pleased and fondly upon him, just as I have seen a father do when he has presented himself suddenly to his little child, who takes a moment or so before he recognises and rushes to him.

Hate the little brute as I did, I couldn't help admiring his perfect *sang froid* and pluck. I felt my own—our own, as we shared it amongst us—vibrate again in unison with what, after all, was of course part and parcel of itself.

"We are delighted to see you," said the mysterious

Party; "the fact is, we were just speaking of you. But here is a very angry violent gentleman, threatening and vowing all manner of dreadful things against you; and I was just on the point of telling him when you came in so unexpectedly"—(there was another lie, by-the-bye, but we didn't think it worth while interrupting him)—"that you were much too dear and faithful a friend of mine for me to think of allowing any such language or sentiments in my presence. But, now you are here yourself, let me tell him fairly and openly before you, and in the presence of these his comrades and own friends, that any attack now or hereafter upon you I shall consider as against myself. Those who serve me faithfully I will serve; and I have no notion of allowing such audacity and defiance!" he said, changing suddenly from his bantering, easy manner, to a most contemptuous, sneering, confidential aside, as he drew close to and feigned to whisper into Gorles' private ear, though he kept his eyes fixed over his shoulder upon me.

"Let him attack you; tempt him to do it, my dear young friend. Don't avoid him—lay yourself in his way; every time you meet him shall bring a curse upon him—your gains shall be his losses—your good luck shall be at his expense. Let him but once be induced to lay the weight of only his little finger

upon you to do you harm—coax him, bribe him, taunt him, I say, into doing so, and from that moment he himself and all he cares for shall be completely under your power."

"May God forbid!" burst from me involuntarily, as I threw up from mine the hand of the Professor.

As that holy name passed my lips all vanished in an instant. The Stranger, Gorles, my companions, and the whole room seemed to have been swept away in one blow—that is, I suppose that it was I myself was carried away from them.

CHAPTER XI.

'TIS A STUPID KID WHO KNOWS NOT HIS OWN DAM.

Old Proverb.

When I opened my eyes I couldn't the least make out where I was. I put my hand up to scratch my head, I suppose—as I have, I know, rather a trick of doing when wanting particularly to consider any matter. To my surprise, there was not a hair upon it—I was as bald as a basin. I was in bed, but not my own, as I saw by the texture and pattern of the furniture. I put back the curtain, and noticing several bottles and gallipots on the table by my bedside, and a large arm-chair with a distinctly defined impression left in the soft cushion, showing that some one had not long since been sitting there, it began to dawn upon me that I may have been lying seriously ill—taken suddenly, I supposed, over-night in the Professor's rooms.

But who could have been taking care of me? I sniffed strongly, as I wondered whether it could have been that good fellow *Taraxacum*, for I knew he

would have been sure to have left a strong fume of tobacco behind him. No; I could only recognise lavender and fresh-cut flowers: a large bouquet was standing in a glass upon a table in the window, which was wide open. The window was new to me, and exactly on the opposite side of the room to which I at first turned my eyes, expecting to find it.

I had no idea where I could be; it was certainly some room I had never even seen before. The ceiling and walls were painted in bright colours with garlands of flowers upon them, and butterflies, and here and there a plump little cupid, sticking about in various topsy-turvey attitudes. While I was yet wondering, the stentorian voice of some man yelling in the street below shook the very room, like the bellowing of all the bulls in Bashan; it was to my ears an unknown tongue. That it wasn't German I was certain, but what on earth "*Cocomero!*" might be I could not guess; so I thought I would just hop out of bed and have a look.

Easier thought than done, though. By Jove! I found I could hardly lift hand or foot; it was just as much as I could do to raise myself up a bit on my pillow. I looked at my hands, I felt my arms; they were more like cricket-stumps than the limbs I had last gone to bed with. "Here's a go!" I thought to

myself; "those swindling beggars have helped themselves to all my nerve and pluck; and I suppose all my natural strength has gone with them, and they have forgotten to return them to me, as they promised to do."

That reflection brought back the whole of the overnight scene distinctly to my mind.

I supposed that either one or the other of them would have the grace to look in before very long; so I shut my eyes, that I might quietly think the better, and resigned myself patiently to wait.

Presently there came a light footstep to the door, the rustle of a female dress; quickly as I opened my eyes again, I only just caught a glimpse of the tail of a gown, as if whoever it might be had just looked in and whisked quickly out again.

"Now for it," I thought; "I am quite prepared for what must in the proper course of things be going to happen." I felt myself to be exactly in the enviable position of one of the regular heroes, in those jolly Irish novels which were the delight of our youth.

I had certainly last night got myself into what might have proved a considerably awkward scrape—that there was no denying,—but, most luckily, have got out of it just as those rattling fellows always did.

"All had suddenly passed before me as a dream."

Yes, so far all was right, sure enough. And now when I should open my eyes, which I had shut again, by-the-bye, so that it should all happen regular, I should of course find the heroine—the long and deeply loved object of my affections—"who would have been nursing and watching over me; and whom I should only just have time to recognise, as with an arch look and a light step her lovely form would in a most provoking manner vanish from my apartment."

But, of course, as soon as I was up again and decently dressed in my clothes—of which articles, by the way, I could see no signs about the room—"we should meet; everything would be arranged all right, and we should live very happy ever afterwards."

I felt for the moment quite convinced that I had been brought somehow into my kind uncle's house; and my heart began to bump fit to knock its way through, as I pictured to myself quite vividly dear little Katie and the relenting colonel, even then whispering and smiling to one another on the other side of the door, and in another instant coming in to declare themselves.

"Here she is," I thought, "I hear the sweep of her dress again, slowly peeping in." I had actually made sure that it must be Katie, fresh-looking and blooming as ever.

Not a bit of it—but who do you think instead? Why, my own dearest old mother!

An exclamation of surprise and—well, I honestly think it was—delight rose to my lips; but I actually hadn't strength enough to make more than a shrill sort of noise, as I uttered the word "Mother!" in a high treble squeak like a rusty door hinge.

Hang it! those rascals must have borrowed my voice as well as my strength for some of their mysterious games. It was too bad; and I said so, as my mother, rushing to my bedside, threw herself down with her face laid against mine upon the pillow, kissing and fondling, and then stopping for a minute to look at me with her eyes running over with tears and smiles, and then falling to kiss my face, my hands, and even the bald top of my head.

"That's too much of a good thing, and a mean advantage they have taken, is it not, mother dear?" I said; "and so I shall tell the Professor and Master *Taraxacum* when they come in, as I suppose they will do. Haven't either of them been down here this morning? But how on earth did you turn up here in Dresden?"

My mother looked at me with a scared expression, and then said: "You must not attempt to talk, dearest, or exert yourself. But you do know me,

dear Frank, don't you now? Don't speak, but nod your head ever so little, if you do."

"Know you, dear mother?" I whispered; "of course I do. But why couldn't you write to say you were coming? And now tell me, where am I?" I had forgotten that I had found out I was in some strange lodgings for a minute or so, but was now beginning to put two and two together. "Have I been very ill? and, if so, how long? How did I get out of the Professor's rooms last night? And did you hear how they got rid of the —— Party—you know who I mean—when they had grown tired of his company?"

"Hush, my darling; you really must not even try to talk, or I shall be obliged to go away again, and leave you."

CHAPTER XII.

UNDER THE CARE OF DR. ZANZANI.

I COULDN'T get my mother to answer any sort of questions, for what seemed to me—though I cannot be sure of that—ever so many days; so there I just had to lie on my back and wonder.

There used to come every day, sometimes twice, a funny-looking old fellow of a doctor, who on the morning on which, as I have described, I first came to myself, walked into my room more like King Bombastes in the play than anything I ever saw before in real life. With his nose stuck straight up in the air, and his toes turned out, he solemnly advanced about half-a-dozen paces, made a very low bow with a grand sweep of his hat to my mother, then marched up to my bedside, and made another low bow to myself: as he took hold of my pulse he perked up his lips and his eyebrows into such an absurdly comical expression that I, really thinking that he was a funny character, making a buffoon of himself purposely to

divert me, burst into a fit of laughter, which made my poor weak ribs and sides smart again.

"This is Doctor Zanzani, my dear," said my mother, with an uneasy, imploring look directed towards me.

"Of Europĕan réputaçion," chimed in the doctor, quite solemnly, but with such a serio-comic face, that in spite of myself, and the pain it gave me, I broke out into another laugh, which shook and put me to worse torture than before.

It occurred to me that I must have been ill of some disease, quinsy perhaps, which can only be cured by laughing (I am sure I have heard of such cases), and that this eminent doctor was not above calling in the functions of nature in aid of art. I wondered whether this irresistible drollery of manner was his own happy invention, or acquired by diligent study and rehearsal.

Dr. Zanzani did not seem exactly to know what to make of me. He gave two or three great gulps, like a stranded fish, and then turned round and solemnly addressed my mother as "Signora," though they carried on the conversation in French. English he professed to know, as I afterwards discovered, but beyond those three words which he had uttered, and, as it appeared, never omitted to utter whenever presented

by name to any British or American citizen, his acquaintance with that tongue was limited. He did not appear particularly handy with his French either; nor, for the matter of that, was my dear mother as good as I dare say she had been when some twenty years or so younger; but they managed to get along somehow.

"A trifle better, perhaps, but still wandering in his mind, as this wild laughter without cause betokens. We must not yet be too sanguine, Signora," he pronounced, pompously, in reply to my mother's eager report, that I had that morning known her, and called her by name. It was amazing what a point she seemed to make of that very simple ebullition of natural affection on my part, and how intensely it seemed to delight her.

As far as I could make out, he said that if I made fair progress, in three or four days' time he should hope to bleed me again.

Confound him! then that was what had made me so awfully weak, was it? and getting my hand up to my arm, sure enough I found it all bandaged up, which I had never noticed till then. My mother seemed to demur rather at that idea, and so they fell out, and I fell off to sleep again, I suppose; for I have a very dim, if any, recollection of the rest of

that day, or indeed for ever so many days after, except that I was continually being crammed at all sorts of hours—sometimes daylight, sometimes lamplight—with basins of beef tea and strong soups, and I found myself gradually growing stronger.

And all that time, as I have said, my mother would never let me speak, or, what was even more aggravating, answer any questions when I asked them in spite of her admonitions, or give any explanations, which at times I longed for intensely, and then again I would feel that I didn't care a rap whether I knew or not.

Old Pomposity Zany, as I christened him, used to come regularly; but he didn't get his own way about bleeding me again. I quite looked forward to his visits, they amused me so awfully; but I never laughed outright at his antics again, though I used to chaff and draw him out quietly sometimes, to my dear mother's constant mental trepidation. I often complimented him upon his knowledge of English, and tried to make him talk in it; but he said that though he knew it thoroughly theoretically, he somehow never could acquire the art of either reading or speaking it practically.

At last, one day I was allowed to be moved on to a sofa near the window, and have my first wing of

chicken for dinner; I never shall forget the effect of that first gaze out of the window on to a well-built terrace or wide quay, below which ran a rapid river.

There were handsome carriages, really first-rate turns-out, with splendid horses and well got-up liveries, and smart ladies inside, pretty girls with great big straw hats and whole baskets full of most lovely flowers, the strong scent of which quite perfumed the air and reached me where I lay: lots of children and nurses, soldiers—a regular busy throng. It must evidently be some considerable city we were in, but still I had not an idea where.

It was a lovely afternoon, or rather evening it must be by the setting sun, which was just lighting up the bright roofs of some buildings and the tops of some beautiful mountains which I could catch glimpses of between the houses and a church on the opposite side of the river, with dyes of gold, and blue, and violet. I suppose, after having kept to my dull bed so long, I appreciated it all the more; but I do not know that I ever felt touched as with the quiet indescribable beauty of that evening.

"Here is a letter from your father, Frank," said my mother; "would you like to read it? You have positively never once asked after him;" and she looked quite reproachfully at me for a minute, for though the

best and kindest of mothers, she could look reproachfully when she liked, I can tell you.

"That is too bad," I answered, "for how could I, when you never even let me get through one question to ask where I am all this time. Well, but how is this? This is an old letter—why, it was written last year, my dear mother. Look, it is dated September."

"Well, my dear, this is only the 2nd, and it is six days' post from England, though now very shortly they say that, when the railroads are open, it will be reduced to four, or even three."

"Second!" I cried; "second of what? Why, we have not got through the middle of June yet, have we?"

My mother looked at me aghast, and said, "Why, Frank, to-day is the 2nd of October."

I really thought she was making game of me. "Come," I said, "dear mother, that won't quite do. People do not lie in sick beds with windows wide open in October, nor do such flowers as these, or those baskets full in the street there, blow in October." We always had a lovely bouquet fresh every morning set upon the table, made up of carnations, jessamines, tuberoses, and every sort of delicious smelling flower.

I turned the letter round before I opened it, to have a look at the direction :—

"À Madame,

"Madame Lambard,

"Casa Lippini,

"Firenze."

"I am none the wiser now," I said; "I never heard of such a city as Casa Lippini, and have no idea in even what quarter of the globe a country called Firenze may happen to be, unless,"—I don't know why, I had a vague idea of some such name in my old geography books,—"connected with the northern regions of Africa. But niggers don't drive in such stunning turns-out as those below us; besides, the people in them are white, and some of them, as far as I can judge at this distance, uncommonly beautiful."

"Did you ever happen to learn in your geography books of a capital called Florence?" my mother asked, smiling.

"You don't mean to say we are in Florence now? of all others in the world, the place I have always most wished to come to, to see the picture galleries, which I have heard are the first and the finest on the whole continent."

"Well, make haste and get well, and your love

for pictures will be fully gratified, you may rely upon it."

"Have you, then, been to them yet, mother?"

"Not I, my dear Frank; I have never been a whole hour from your bedside since we arrived at this place, which will be five weeks exactly to-morrow. Your father went three or four times while he was here, and his accounts of what he had seen were marvellous."

"My father! has my father actually been here, too, and I have never seen him, or, at least, known him, if I have done so?"

"Your father only left this place a fortnight since. That letter, as you may see, announces his safe arrival at home. He stayed on in hopes of some change in you for the better, up to the last moment; but he was obliged to return to England upon some important business, as well as some very troublesome law matters about a will; and as the doctors declared that you might go on for weeks, or perhaps months, without recovering, he determined, though most reluctantly, to set off, and come out again to join us, in hopes of then finding you better, as soon as he could possibly get away."

"It begins to strike me, my dear mother, rather forcibly that I have been rather seriously ill. What

has been the matter with me? How came you to come out to me at Dresden? And how did you manage to bring me, in the state I must have been, all the way down here? And, in short, please to tell me, mamma, all about everything, beginning quite at the beginning, and going all the way down to the end."

Well, it seemed that not having heard from me for some considerable time—I never was a good hand at letter writing—the parents had been growing very fidgetty, particularly as I had never acknowledged a remittance of money which had been sent to me; that two letters, and a telegram desiring me to send back a notification of my existence immediately by the same conveyance, had received not the slightest acknowledgment.

But some three or four days later a telegraphic dispatch had roused them up at three o'clock in the morning, urging some one to come, or be sent out to me immediately from home, for that I had for some days been lying seriously, and was now dangerously, ill. They had, of course, started off by the earliest train, travelling night and day.

It was the English clergyman who had thus telegraphed for them. I had never known him personally, but he had seen me going in and out at the De Lormes'

I suppose, and, perhaps, noticed me at church. Anyhow, he had heard from a doctor, who, it seems, had been called in by the landlady of my lodgings, after, as he had been given to understand, I had been lying for three or four days in a state of complete stupor, and having no one near me, or appearing to belong, or to take any interest in me, except two casual acquaintances, in the rooms of one of whom, I had been originally taken ill, and had passed the first night on the sofa upstairs—godless medical students, or some such sort of people, whom he hinted were by no means reputable, or very desirable acquaintances.

"I wish the parson wouldn't be quite so officious with his opinion, but would learn to mind his own business," I said. "What was the fellow's name?" I let slip.

"Oh, Frank!" exclaimed my mother, as if quite horrified, "do you mean to say you can have been living more than four months in a place, and not know the English clergyman's name? I am really afraid you must have become little better than an atheist and a heathen!"

"Well, that is coming it a little too strong, mother dear. I do not see that it can make much difference in my religious tenets, or duties, whether the parson of the place be the Reverend Mr. Jones or the

Reverend Mr. Robinson. I suppose I never thought of asking because I never cared to know. I am not sure that I much care now. I dare say he may have been a very good fellow in his way, slightly addicted, as they are all of them often apt to be, to rather illiberal opinions in regard to their neighbours, but, otherwise, harmless; though, as a rule, many of the divines one meets with settled in foreign parts are uncommon queer fishes, I can tell you."

"Oh! pray do not, my dear boy, speak in that dreadfully profane way of things which are holy."

"Do you consider parsons to be 'things,' mother?" I asked innocently; but there I saw she was vexed, so I changed the topic. "But did you then see nothing of those two fellows, either the Professor or *Taraxacum*, my friend De Lyons, I should say? Did they never come to see after or give you any account of me? I wish, by the way, the former had remembered to return what he had borrowed of me," I added, half to myself.

"There was a strange-looking person in your room when we first arrived, but he was in a great state of excitement, quarrelling with the doctor who had been called in to you, an excellent man, and, I have no doubt, very clever, as he could talk English with scarcely the least accent. There was a terrible battle

going on over you, but your father very soon bowed the long-haired gentleman out of the door; and the doctor gave us an awful account of the ways and character of that dreadful man. Even before he told us, I was sure he was a dreadful man by the very look of him. I rather think that he did attempt once or twice to come again, but we entirely declined to see him. The other person you mention, Mr. Lyons, do you say his name was? came to ask very civilly whether he could in any way be useful to us; and, now you allude to it, I remember that he did ask that the Professor, by whom I suppose he meant that horrid man, might be allowed a private interview with you, if only for a quarter of an hour, and he said that it had to do with returning something very particular which he had borrowed of you. The idea of a private interview with anybody lying perfectly senseless as you were at the time, with but barely the signs of actual life in you! a strange idea, indeed! Your father would not hear of it, of course, though Mr. Lyons urged it very persistently, and even wrote to the same effect. But we answered, begging to decline any sort of communication with that horrid person, either on your part (which was out of the question) or on our own; but that if there were anything of real value which he might have to

return it might be sent by messenger; but should it be only in the shape of a pecuniary obligation, and the least inconvenient, we should be most happy either to forward a receipt as if repaid, or leave it entirely to the gentleman's own time and convenience."

"Oh, mother!" I cried out, "you didn't know what you were doing. In consequence of that rash refusal, I shall never now probably get back—— that is, as long as I live, I shall never be the same man again. And here have I been accusing these poor fellows of dishonestly possessing themselves of one of my principal qualities."

"Hush! my dear Frank," said my mother, looking alarmed, "you are over-exciting yourself; you must get back to your bed again at once; you are still weak as can be. I shall not talk to you any more, as you are beginning again to ramble; that will never do, you know."

"Well just tell me, shortly, how you managed to bring me all this way down here, and then I will be a good boy, and not speak another word."

"Well, let me see, it must have been the Sunday morning after we arrived; I know it was Sunday, for I was reading the second lesson of the day, when that odd Mr. Lyons—well, *De* Lyons, then, it's all the

same—came knocking at the door, and begged very civilly and humbly to know whether, as we would not allow either him or his horrid friend to come in to see you, I should mind letting him have a lock of your hair to keep for your sake. Your father was for refusing, and not giving in to such romantic foreign sentimental stuff, as he called it; but I thought, though rather ridiculous, yet still it showed a nice and affectionate feeling for you, and, as there could be no harm in it, I complied with the request; and it was that very same afternoon, a little later, that a decided change came over you, and you seemed all at once to shake off the state of stupor you had been lying in, and to change from passive into a state of active insensibility. I mean, that you began to talk and shout and tumble yourself about; but you never recognised us, but rambled and ran on incoherently sometimes for hours together; and so you continued, sometimes worse and sometimes better, only quiet at times as if from sheer exhaustion, and thus recruiting your strength for a few days only to begin again. As soon as you could be moved, entire change of air and scene was recommended for you, and we set out, to bring you with us down southwards by easy stages, stopping more or less time, according to the state you

were in, or as we thought the physicians at the various places seemed to understand your case.

"At Prague, Vienna, Gratz, we stayed for many days, it was at the latter we began to hope that we saw some slight amendment. While there we met an English family, who strongly recommended us to come on at once to Florence, to put you under the care of Dr. Zanzani, and they told us of two precisely similar cases to your own, in which he had been entirely successful, after all others had failed, and pronounced them hopeless.

"So that, and some further inquiries which your father instituted, decided us to come on without more delay. And on we came, accordingly, by Trieste, Venice, Padua, and from thence across the country, by Bologna, as fast as a veturino could bring us.

"And a most truly fortunate thing it has been for us thus to have met those kind people, and heard of this doctor, who, if he is not quite, really ought to be, as he flatters himself, of European reputation, for within a very short time there certainly was a manifest change for the better. He reduced the violence of your delirium, though, I confess, at the time, I was sometimes alarmed at the way in which he also reduced your strength by frequent bleedings; however,

it shows he was right in his treatment, and that he is indeed a very clever man, in spite of his being pompous and ridiculous in his manner."

"Mother!" I said, when she had got me safe back again into bed, and made me—fancy a great, I was going to say hulking, though, at that time, lanky fellow of six feet odd—actually say my prayers out loud to her, just as—God bless her, dear old mother!—I used to do when I was a little child,—"Mother, dear," I asked, "what did I talk about whilst I was so bad and delirious: did I seem to stick to any one particular subject?"

I longed, and yet almost dreaded to hear her answer.

"Subject!" said my mother; "oh, every sort of imaginable subject; wild nonsense, of course. There was a good deal, though, about a certain young lady."

She looked rather serious as she mentioned this; but patted the back of my hand very gently as it lay outside the quilt. "Indeed that topic recurred so often, that it rather distressed me, and your father still more so; but there, there, it is all over now, and we must wait till you get quite well again, and strong enough to be properly scolded, you bad boy. Sometimes you evidently fancied that you were a boy back again at Eton, for you kept calling out after that schoolfellow whom you always suspected of behaving

so infamously to you. Bless my heart, how time does go! it really seems like only last year or so that you were at school, writing home those earnest, vehement letters about your enemy, Pauls, Smalls, Gorles—what was that wicked school-fellow's name? I think that although you did not understand what we said to you, your ear must have taken in the sound of his name, when your father happened to speak of him to me while sitting at your bedside; for it was curious that you should have been specially affected by the memory of him the very day we had met him at the *table d'hôte* of the Hotel New York, where we were staying before we moved into this private house. Mr. Gorles introduced himself, and thanked your father for the repayment of that money you had borrowed of him, into his London bankers': that reminds me that we have never yet heard the particulars of that scrape, or how it could be that you should contract a debt with that young man of all people in the world. Your father said at the time that it seemed very odd, considering how much you have disliked, and have always since spoken of him; but I suppose you have made it all up and are really great friends now; at least he seemed very fond of you, for upon my mentioning that you had been so bad that even all your hair had had to be shaved off, he directly asked

me to let him have a piece, in remembrance of old times. Your father became angry, and was quite rude to the poor little man, and said that among Germans such romantic sentimentality was ridiculous enough: but for an Englishman to make such a request was absolutely sickening. He looked rather disappointed, but he did not seem to take offence."

"Oh, mother! is that abominable little wretch here again to torment me?" I cried. "Oh, for my sake, for all our sakes, keep him away from me!" for I felt sure that he must have followed me down to carry out the advice of that awful Party, and by tempting me to attack him, get me thoroughly in his power. The very thought of him threw me back into a fearful state of excitement. "But tell me truly, you surely did not let him have a single hair of my head? what have you done with it? For mercy's sake, mother, have it all burnt, have it destroyed; have it put out of the way!" and I rolled upon my pillow in an agony of helpless terror. I was very weak, you know, and had no control over my feelings.

Dr. Zanzani came that evening, expecting to find me twenty-four hours better than over night, and had been talking about my getting out in a carriage next day. He took my mother into the next room, and through the open door I heard him giving her a good blowing up—poor dear old mother!

CHAPTER XIII.

FIRENZE LA BELLA!

THERE are few sensations of pleasure and real happiness in this life equal to those of recovering from a severe illness. Every morning one rises, feeling day by day that one's strength is increasing, and energies, mental and physical, expanding; and then what an appetite one has, and how sweet and refreshing is one's sleep! It is always delightful anywhere, even if you happen to be in a place where there is nothing particular to do with yourself but get well, without any extra enjoyments; but when you happen, as in my case, to have the luck to find yourself in the most charming, the most interesting, and one of the loveliest spots in the world, the pleasure and gratification is of course tenfold more delicious in proportion. The only sort of drawback to my otherwise perfect happiness of that time was, that since I had heard of the presence of my "*bête noire*" in Florence, I for some time felt a repugnance—a kind of timidity at first going out, lest I should meet him anywhere.

All the time I despised myself for the feeling, and

felt ashamed of being such a chicken-hearted coward; but the remembrance of why I was so, having, as I had, you know, so unfortunately made over a great portion of my natural courage, did not conduce to my comfort; not to speak of the dire threats of that awful Being in relation to myself and Gorles, which had made a deep and lasting impression upon my mind. However, as the hair upon my head began to grow, and I became more presentable in appearance, and less like a singed skeleton, and my bodily strength daily increased, as Dr. Zanzani, to the great disturbance of my mamma's notions of propriety declared, like Samson's in proportion to my locks, I struggled against my nervousness; and as we never happened to encounter the enemy anywhere in the streets or surrounding drives, the feeling gradually wore off; and after the first few days I broke myself of the habit of coming out of our front door to the carriage head first, and looking all up the street, and then down the street, both ways; as we always used to do, don't you remember, at Eton when we had gone through that absurd ceremony of "shirking" a master into a shop? I do not think as long as I live that I shall ever lose the memory of my intense enjoyment of those drives which my mother and I used to take every day after our early dinner.

Oh, if I were only happily a poet in the power of language! which, as I have already told you, I am convinced I am so far as feelings go, and that, after all, is the main part of the business. I wish I could convey to you the beauties of that jolly old "Cascini," with its long avenues of its thickly-leaved trees hanging right over the drives, and the large circular square (well, what do you call it?) place in the middle, where all the carriages full of the most excruciatingly beautiful ladies draw up together to gossip; and the loveliest flower-girls come and smile at you, and stick the freshest flowers in your button-holes, and if you wont take them fling them at you, and never ask for and wont even take payment; that is until you are going to leave the place, when I believe they always happen to be in the way, and expect a napoleon or two as a parting compliment.

But the beauty of the scenery is the real thing, after all: there is the race-course in the foreground, those lovely green meadows—though there were no races while we were there, not that I meant to mention them—but the view of the mountains beyond them, golden, purple, ultramarine, lapis lazuli, all mingled together, with an occasional dash of lake and rich orange, powdered over with hundreds of little white villas, just like sugar plums as they glisten in the

glorious sunset. Oh, that I could only find words and adjectives of admiration in the superlative degree enough only to describe the loveliness of that always changing, always improving scenery! How our spirits (my dear mother's and mine I mean, you know,) used silently to revel in those beauties with our eyes filled with tears, and our mouths full of ices, which more lovely maidens used to bring round among the carriages in large green cans. Then sometimes we would drive up to the overhanging heights of ancient Fiesole, and what a scene then lay at our feet as we gazed down upon the matchless Val d'Arno, in the centre of which lies spread that grand old city Florence, with its quaint old towers, so grand and so irregular, clustering round the famous cupola of the Duomo.

Every day a fresh drive in a different direction, every day fresh views, from Pratolino, Bello Squardo, St. Miniato, Villa Salviati, and hundreds of other places whose names I have forgotten, are to be enjoyed and impressed upon one's fondest recollections for ever.

You have seen Florence yourself, you say, and were disappointed. How long were you there? I know exactly—four days for Florence is, I believe, the allowance, and eight to do Rome.

What with excursion trains and season tickets now-

a-days, every Cockney may see all Italy, Malta, the Pyramids, and Jerusalem in one month for twelve pounds ten a-head, *commissionnaires* included; soap, bougies, and more than two shirts washing a week charged extra.

And those are the sort of gentry who, having run up for five hours with a return ticket from Leghorn, and having perhaps heard or read something of the gay and beautiful Florence, have, I suppose, pictured to themselves a Place de la Concorde, or a flaunting Boulevarde, as at Paris; or even shop windows and flaring gas lamps, like their own beloved Regent Street; and not finding it exactly to their own vulgar tastes or powers of appreciation, go home to write articles for magazines and weekly periodicals, in which they take upon themselves to state that all former accounts of the beautiful city are exaggerated, and only imaginary.

I remember, at the very time I am speaking of, one day taking up a number of a magazine, in which one of these fellows had favoured the public with a description of Florentine society. It seemed he had been invited to an evening reception at his banker's, on the strength of a letter of credit addressed to that worthy gentleman, who, as I happened to know, with his most respectable but rather limited financial trans-

actions, used to combine a retail business in tea and other groceries, besides being agent for Galignani's newspaper.

It was in the house of this most unexceptionable character that the lively contributor actually described, and I suppose believed, that he had been mixing with the very *crême de la crême* of Florentine society. The great point and special delight of that *réunion* seemed to have been that Mario, the celebrated tenor, was expected, but did *not* come, which unfortunate circumstance did not, however, prevent him giving an exact description, on hearsay, of Signor Mario's private life, as well as his villa which he had then lately purchased, and which, I suppose, the writer had had an opportunity of visiting, as may any other stranger, for a matter of half a scudo—two and twopence—presented to the porter.

Bah! such scribbling idiots sicken me! Beautiful and rich in nature's gifts, Florence is even tenfold richer in art. You may stay there for months, and every day have something fresh to see, something new to enjoy and wonder at. In the very streets and large irregular squares are to be seen the handiworks of the greatest artists the world has ever known; every doorway, every second pillar is a study: then, turn inside their

public buildings—in what other city in the world can you see such glorious collections of pictures, whole rooms full of works, every single one of which would, if distributed, raise any collection it might find its way into to the highest rank ?

Where else in the whole world can one see under one roof the finest works of antiquity—the Venus, the Faun, the Wrestlers ?—and actually have to back against such treasures of art, that you may surfeit your eye with such pictures as the "Youthful St. John," or the more charming "Cardalino" of Raffaelle, the "Madonna del Francesco" of Andrea del Sarto, or the incomparable "Adoration" of Correggio.

I said surfeit, and surfeit is the right word. There is too much to enjoy at once, one feels overwhelmed by it; and then to stand, as I did one day, and see three gaping fellows, take one cast of their eyes round the tribune, and then one, with Murray tucked up close under his arm, proclaim aloud, that "the frames are certainly not half so stunning as those in the *other shop;* (the Pitti Palace was, of course, what he meant by that, to him, probably, most familiar term), and now we have done this place, the Uffizi, they call it, don't they ? we shall only have the Academy, and that Church up on the hill outside, the book says

we must do, and by then it will be pretty well dinner time."

I would have paid a five-pound note to have knocked those wretches' heads against the door-post; but, as the Custode happened to be there, and from my entire ignorance of the language, I may have found a difficulty in explaining the awful provocation, which, humbly-bred officer as he was, I feel sure he would have appreciated and sympathised in, if he could only have understood me; so I so far restrained myself as to rush off into the next apartment, where that glorious work of Albertinelli, which, if, as you say, you have been to Florence, you must of course remember, occupies, as it ought to do, the central place of honour on the walls of the room exclusively dedicated to the Tuscan school.

Now that is a picture that every time I went to the Uffizi I found myself again and again, and each time more attracted by. There may be many others of equal, or even higher, merit in that same collection; there are, I know, several which rank before it in the general estimation of the artistic, not to speak of the gaping world; but as we stood for the twentieth time gazing at that "*Salutazione*," I felt, and I frightened the dear old mother out of her wits as I confessed to her that I felt, that I should just like to roll myself before it, and howl. I have been conscious of the same pro-

found feeling in the presence of other astounding works of art, but of that above all others.

Oh! what would I give to get some of those idiots of the pre-Raphaelite persuasion before that wondrous picture; to hold them by the scruff of their necks and shake them till their eyes shoot out, and then make them kneel in the dust before it, and cry "Peccavimus." If it were not for the picture's sake, which God forbid I should ever injure, I should like to rub their noses against it, and let them learn and confess the difference between that glorious specimen of cinque-cento art, which is what they pretend to have reproduced, and their own ridiculous caricatures, which they flatter themselves to be true fidelity of representation. Let them stand within a foot of that canvass, and they may then see every blade of grass, every daisy separately and distinctly delineated; yes, they may distinguish the very texture of the garments, the difference between the threads of the old woman's coarse petticoat and the woollen kerchief, which is thrown over her shoulders:—"precisely what is found fault with in our works by the uneducated public:" they will be ready to say, with a self-satisfied snigger. Not a bit of it: how much of the principal figures can you see or pretend to admire while close enough to distinguish these details?

Step back, my friends, to where your eye can take

in the whole composition, the old woman tenderly, reverentially, inclining forward towards the younger, so divinely beautiful, with her expression of modesty without embarrassment, of consciousness without shame; has any painter, greater and more renowned though he may be for other works, ever excelled that one for expression, simplicity, and harmony of colour and sentiment? But, now, as you look, where are the blades of grass, and variegated leaves of the herbage at their feet? do the coarse threads or texture of the vestments catch your eye, or for an instant distract your thoughts from the main beauty and holiness of the subject?

Out, I say, upon these wretched pretenders, with their brick-dust complexioned staring lay figures, clothed in garments of brilliant purple and scarlet, with thick folds which look as if they were stiffened with tin or sheet iron, as they sit in orchards where the apple blossoms are, in proportion to the human figures, as big as cauliflowers, and while the trees themselves are the size of gooseberry bushes, and each blade of long grass stands up stiff like an asparagus sprout. Which do you see first, when half across the room, the blossoms or the grass blades? certainly not the brick-dust coloured specimens of humanity—bah!

CHAPTER XIV.

LA CONTESSA SOTTONEBBIA.

"A young gentlewoman here in Florence, of a most chaste renown."
All's Well that Ends Well, act iv., sc. 3.

Well, driven as I was from the tribune by the Goths and Visigoths whom I have described, I had turned naturally to compose my ruffled feelings before my favourite "*Salutazione*," when, as I entered the doorway, I started back so suddenly that I nearly overturned my mother, who was quietly following, head and ears well into her Murray, close behind me. There stood straight opposite to me, in exactly, or nearly exactly the same rich dark dress and showy jewelry that I had seen her in before, that haughty-looking but beautiful lady whom the strange Party had shown us that night in the Professor's room.

I should have known her anywhere—I could have sworn to her, if I had met her in the thickest crowd in the world, say on a Derby-day, or all alone on the

top of Mont Blanc—it was she herself and no other. Her eye just caught mine with a glance of half astonishment and, as I for a moment thought, recognition, for she certainly made a sort of start, and then a flush and half-smile passed across her face as she turned away, pretending to be interested in one of those fine Guirlandajo's which hang on the wall opposite to the Albertinelli I have been describing.

My mother, who is sharp enough with her eyes, looked for a moment at the grandly-dressed lady, and then hard at me. "Frank," she said, in a low voice, "do you know—where have you ever met that ——?" she seemed to hang fire at the word "lady," and changed it to "*person*," which was always her epithet for any one, male or female, whom she doesn't happen to take a fancy to.

"Met that lady?" I replied. "Yes, mother, once before; and in a place and under circumstances I do not suppose I should ever forget, if I live to be a hundred; though don't ask me where, for you would not believe me, I know, if I were to tell you."

I had, I must tell you, once begun to relate that extraordinary interview and adventure at Dresden, but before I had even got half way into it, my mother had stopped me, and so completely shut me up, desiring me never even to allude to such a subject,

that I had made up my mind never to mention it again in her presence, which determination I must of course have broken, had I attempted to explain where and when I had before seen that dashing dame.

"I give you my honour that I never have exchanged a word with her in my life," I went on, as I saw an expression of distress and virtuous indignation rising on the maternal countenance; "but, by Jove! I must confess that I should like of all things just to get an introduction to her, enough to be able to ask whether she really was actually in person in that room —well, never mind where, the night I did see her——"

"For shame, Frank! for shame!" to dare even to make such an avowal before your own mother's face in regard to a creature who is notorious for her open profligacy even in this wicked, profligate place."

"Well, mother, you certainly seem to know all about her at any rate;" and I turned round, before following my mother, who, full of indignation, had walked off in the opposite direction without another word, just to have at least one more peep at the naughty lady.

She had evidently been watching, probably had overheard and understood what had passed, for she seemed highly amused; and, in rather a marked manner, looking back into the further doorway, beckoned up somebody from within the next apartment.

An irresistible sort of presentiment made me stop feeling perfectly certain that it would be the Professor who would come in; I am sure that I would have bet a hundred, yes, a hundred thousand to one that it was him.

When, in answer to the familiar summons, in walked—Gorles; yes, Gorles himself was the companion of that lady gay!

I do not think that I was at the moment so staggered, as if I had had time to think, I should have expected to have been. I suppose the fact is, that I had been so astonished just before at encountering the lady, that my feelings had not had time to recover their equilibrium, or perhaps the two astonishments counteracted each other, on the principle of two affirmatives which make a negative, you know; or, at least, t'other way up, two negatives, which is it? Well, anyhow, it's all the same for the use of a comparison.

I rather wonder now, that, weak and nervous as I still was from my illness, I did not just cut and run; I rather think that such was my first impulse, but pride prevented me. I stood where I was, and stared at him, with my eyes wide open, fascinated, as a bird is said sometimes to be by a cat.

Gorles's attention was directed towards me by his

gay companion. As she took the catalogue of pictures out of his hand, I remarked that she said something to him in a low voice.

He gave a decided jump, upon recognising me, as I saw he did at once, and then came hurrying across the room with his odious little hand stretched out.

I was not going to shake hands with the little brute —it wasn't likely—so I kept my fists deep down in my front pockets, making believe not to see his outstretched paw: but he did not choose to notice my rebuff, for grinning at me with fiendish malice, he shook me by the elbow; squeaking at the top of his horrid shrill voice: "How d'ye do, my dear fellow! I am so glad to see you, and to find that you are well enough to get about again after your serious illness, which I was so sorry to hear of. I had no idea that you were still in Florence; I should certainly have called to inquire after you, but meeting your people no longer at the hotel, I fancied you had all moved on somewhere. Your father and mother were so kind as to allow me to make their acquaintance; and that is how I knew of your illness."

I only grunted at him, in reply to his obliging inquiries. I felt that I did not dare trust my voice to articulate even the simplest words. I was longing to throttle him, and crush him under my feet; but I

remembered what a warning I had received, and what the consequences would be if I were tempted to lay violent hands upon him. I nodded my head, and mumbled something about having my mother waiting for me, and was turning off on my heel to rejoin her. But he wasn't going to let me escape him so easy as all that; and so I suppose it did not suit him to observe my repugnance, which must have been pretty obvious, too, for I made no attempt to conceal it.

"Bless me!" the horrid little monster went on in the coolest and most affable tone possible, "what a treat it is thus to run against an old friend and schoolfellow unexpectedly! how it calls up old times, and bygone scenes, doesn't it? What a time it is since we have had the pleasure of seeing one another."

"Speak for yourself," I said, "if you please, as to such treats and pleasures. Schoolfellows we were, unfortunately: but there was not much friendship lost between us; and as to the time since we last met, it is not so very long ago that we were at Dresden."

"Ah," said he, "just the same, I see, as ever, Frank by name, and frank by nature, the original Lambard still all over, rough, or I suppose I must say, plain-spoken, and ready as ever. But though we were at Dresden together, I am quite right all the same, for I said it was so long since we had seen anything of

each other, going on for six or even seven years. Just think of that!—heigh ho! how time does whisk along!"

I felt my blood boiling up fast to bursting point, but I kept my fists well dug down into my trouser pockets, and I was determined that nothing should bring them out; besides, against such a pigmy, such an earwig! I had no idea how really small he was, or how big I had myself grown, until I now looked down upon him as he stood close opposite to me. I might have taken him up by the nape of his neck, and pitched him flying out of the window, or into the river; but as to striking or even kicking such a contemptible little beast, it was almost out of the question.

I don't think he can have had much idea of what was passing through my mind, for, assuming a would-be facetious tone, he actually poked with his forefinger at the lower button of my waistcoat, as he cried, as if suddenly recollecting himself—"Dresden! Ha! ha! to be sure—true enough! I heard of you at Dresden the very night before I left that place, though I never saw you, you know."

"All the better for you, perhaps, that you didn't," I could not resist answering.

"Well, perhaps it was, considering where your

letter was dated from that night; but that reminds me that leaving Dresden, as I was obliged to do that very next morning, I never heard how that escapade of yours with the police was settled. I was so glad to be able to be of use to you, as I hope I really was; and was much obliged to you for the cheque which was so promptly repaid in to my bankers' in London. I would have written to have acknowledged it if I had known where; but I think, my dear fellow, you might as well have sent me one line to have let me know how the matter ended, if not to have thanked one for a favour."

"I did not consider that a favour," I replied, every moment getting more angry at the creature's bumptiousness, "when it has been thrust upon one, not only entirely unasked for, but unwished for and unwelcome. It was deuced lucky for you that I could not find any one else to lend me the money that same night in time to have met you with it at the railway station the next morning on which you left. I would gladly have paid cent. per cent. to have been able to have paid you back at once, and if I had caught you at that time would have settled another score which I owed you, and then had every intention of paying to the full. But you are safe from my revenge now, and you know why; and though no power shall induce

me to touch you, let me tell you in the plainest English that you *lie*, like your particular friend and backer the dev—, the strange spirit. I tell you that you *lie!* The evening you allude to was not the last that you were at Dresden, as you know well enough, for it was at least a fortnight or three weeks later that we met there face to face. I saw you, and you saw me; so do not like a little liar as you are attempt to deny it."

The feigned expression of astonishment, mingled with indignant innocence, which the little hypocrite assumed, both in his countenance and voice, would have made his fortune as an actor, as he shook his head, and with a smile, or rather ghastly grin, said, "I assure you, my dear fellow, I do not understand what you are talking about, or what you are driving at. Do you wish to quarrel with me?" and as if accidentally, in the earnestness of his inquiry, though of course I knew well enough what his object was, he stuck his nose up at an angle in the most tempting manner exactly within reach of my fist, if I had only just drawn it out of my pocket; but there I kept it fixed tight, as if rooted like a tree in the earth.

"Quarrel with you!" I said; "no, thank you. As I have already told you, no provocation you may give

shall induce me to touch you. I defy you to make me do so."

He bit his lips, and pretended to look puzzled; and then, after a pause, with an air of mock dignity, just like a bantam cock going to crow, he made a sort of pirouette on his heels, and as he turned round I experienced an acute itching in my toe, which required an almost superhuman effort to control. "At least, my dear fellow," he said, as he brought himself round on his pivot again, facing me.

"I am not your dear fellow," I cut him short, "and I beg that you will not call me so."

"Well there, my dear sir, or Mr. Lambard, if you prefer it. I do not at all understand your motives or your manner; but at least I think it due to myself to convince you that I am correct, and that you have been mistaken; for I can, as it happens, prove to you on the spot that I have not been at Dresden since the night which I have stated, in consequence of a particular event the exact date of which I happen to be able to speak to with accuracy.

"Though you do not seem anxious to renew our acquaintance, I should like, for my own credit's sake, since you have thought fit thus brusquely, to say the least of it, to impugn my veracity, to cause you to regret your hastiness, as I am sure you will before we

part. If you will, therefore, allow me to introduce you to the lady whom I have had the honour to accompany to this gallery this morning, she will be able, as it fortunately happens, easily to corroborate the accuracy of my statement.

The lady, pretending to be entirely occupied with a close scrutiny of the pictures, but, as I could see, all the while watching us out of the corner of her eye, had gradually come round the room close upon where we were standing.

Before I knew what he was at, the impudent little rascal was introducing me.

"Madame la Contessa di Sottonebbia," he began, with an evident unction, as he elevated himself on his tip-toes, and mouthed out the fine-sounding title of the magnificent signora, "permettez-moi l'honneur de vous presenter mon ami, Monsieur Lambard."

Riled as I was with him, what could I do? I was obliged to bow, finding myself thus brought face to face with a lady, whoever she was, though entirely unprepared for this unsought-for introduction. I was accordingly in the actual performance of that usual ceremony of bringing my nose down to the regulation propinquity to my toes, when I found myself, if not roughly, very tightly seized by the arm, which nipping

my gracefully commenced proclination in the bud, brought me upright again with a sudden and, I am afraid, not very dignified exclamation of pain and surprise ; and before I could recover my breath, or, I might say, wink my eyes, I found myself half-way down the corridor, marched off in the custody and under the firm and unrelenting grasp of an indignant and, as she fully believed herself, grossly outraged mother.

CHAPTER XV.

"Very hard lines are sometimes ruled for us by those
we've loved the best."

W. Fraser's Essay on *The Sex*.

Not a single word passed between us as we descended those many flights of steps, and sternly pushing me into the carriage before herself—as though I should try to escape and bolt back to the dreadful syren from whose thralls she had so boldly rescued me, and in the same spirit of grave precaution even pulling up all the glasses and lowering the blinds—I was conducted, with all the solemnity of a state prisoner, and in perfect silence, back to our apartments.

But bless the dear lady! when she had got me safe home, and had actually ordered me to go up to my own room, and there pray on my bended knees for forgiveness and repentance, it was, I thought, carrying matters a little too far. "Come, mother dear," I said, attempting to pacify her, "a joke is a joke, but this is downright absurd and ridiculous." Then didn't she just about pitch into me!

It was almost more than I could stand, but I tried

my best not to lose my temper, but to laugh it off and to turn the whole matter into a joke. I thought at the time it was the best way; but as bad luck would have it, it proved instead of the best, to be the very worst line I could possibly have hit upon.

I ought not to have answered at all; it was wrong of me, I know, particularly in the light and chaffing tone I did, though it was most ridiculous, you know; still it was not dutiful plainly to say so, and perhaps it is not very dutiful of me thus now to allude to it. Indeed, I should not do so to any one else; but having already told you so much, and so many regular details of the secret feelings and motives of my life, I don't mind you as I should another person. The fact is, it does me good somehow thus to make a clean breast of it; so I tell it all straight on just as it comes, good and bad. I don't want to make myself out any better than I really am, and if you think the worse of me—why there, I can't help it. I am one of those who think that women ought always to be spoken to and spoken of respectfully and tenderly. They ought to be treated by us men, of whatever rank in life or age we may be, with the greatest consideration for their weaknesses; for any one who has had anything to do with the gentler sex, in the shape of female relations, and most men have in some shape or another, you

know. Even if not blessed with sisters or cousins, let alone wives, all of us, or at least almost all of us, must have had a mother of some sort, and at some time or another, I suppose; and so everybody, I may say, as a general rule must have had more or less opportunities of observing what very queer animals womenkind in many of their ways are—charming, affectionate, long-suffering, and all the rest of it, no doubt, as the poet—what's his name?—has so beautifully described them—

> O Woman! in our hours of ease
> While things go straight, not hard to please;
> But when the other way they go,
> The very deuce it is, you know.

Which you will find to be true enough, if you only happen, by any bad luck, to set going their prejudices or suspicions of propriety and virtue in regard to any other of their own sex.

Let them only take a notion of that sort into their heads, and then, oh deliver us! nothing short of hydraulic pressure will ever smooth things down again. Steam power is a joke to the force and resistance of their awful obstinacy in such cases; even the gentlest, the weakest, the most confiding of their species will become transformed into the most obstinate, irrational, unjust, bitter, aggravating, uncon-

vincible creatures, in every respect exactly the opposite to one's own *beau idéal*, or what poets and other polite writers have described them to be.

There, then, was my dear mother, who was naturally the kindest, the softest-hearted, the most charitable of beings, having taken up that absurd prejudice, as far as I was concerned, but as I in vain tried to convince her, perfectly unfounded, abusing me worse than a pickpocket: there was no crime in the calendar which, in her bitter and unjust indignation she stuck at imputing to me. And what is more, she not only laid every sort of iniquity to my charge, but fully believed it too.

That was what made me so angry. May I be forgiven! I have often been sorry for that day since; for though the provocation was sore, I ought, I know, to have remembered, how kind, how good she had been to me from my childhood up, through all my school and college days, many and many a time standing between me and my poor father's just wrath when I had been getting into some of my usual scrapes and troubles; often, I know, denying herself so as to be able to assist me when run short, as I so often was; but at the time it seemed all the harder that she, whom I could not remember up to that unlucky day ever having spoken a harsh word, or given

me an angry look, should be now prepared to consider me, her only son, in the light of a scoundrel, liar, and debauched profligate, and in short everything infamous (though perhaps not conveyed in quite such plain English) that her distorted imagination could suggest as most hopelessly evil. There was no use in even attempting to reason with her; she would not listen to or believe one syllable I had to say, as she herself told me in so many words.

As far as I could make out, she must have seen that grand lady for some time previously going about the place at the Cascini, I suppose; or somewhere and from some one—that old gossip, Zanzani, very likely—heard some startling particulars, I fear not altogether to that said lady's credit or renown. Indeed, there was no doubt that she was infamous, glorying and loudly ostentatious in her public shame; and having covered with every possible disgrace some two, three, or even four husbands, all living, was reported to have ruined some dozen or two of reckless youths into the bargain. "And it was for such a creature that I had actually left her, my own mother's side, or what was the same, lingered purposely behind, in a public place, openly to renew my acquaintance with her." Again and again I protested that so far from renewing or even seeking an acquaintance, I had never exchanged

a single word with the wicked lady in my life; that, as I have just told you now, the introduction was unexpected, and entirely unsought for on my part. I might have talked on for a week, or till now: I should never have persuaded my mother to listen to simple reason.

"Don't tell me such nonsense," was all the rejoinder I received; "and add to your insult towards myself and to your already grievous sin by falsehood and perjury, sir. You seem to forget that you yourself told me that you had lately met the —— 'person' somewhere else, and even that you had something particular to say to her."

"If so," I replied, "what need could I have to be introduced to her, then, as a perfect stranger? as you yourself came back just in time to see. That must prove to you, dear mother, if you will only consider fairly for one moment, that there was no previous acquaintance between us."

"Oh, I cannot pretend to explain all your in-and-out motives, and wheels within wheels, as I have no doubt there are. I do not even wish to try to understand them; but do not suppose that I am to be deceived by such shallow devices."

"But surely, mother," I said, earnestly, "you will believe my solemn word of honour ——"

"Wheels within wheels," was all she would reply.

"You would not even allow me to explain under what circumstances I fancied I had once before met, that is, seen that lady, although I again repeat that I have never exchanged even a single word with her."

"Wheels within wheels. Now, at last, I understand for whom that lock of hair of yours was wanted——"

It was, indeed, really more than I could bear; I was afraid of entirely losing all control over my temper. I felt that the only thing I could do was to get away or to escape, before I should be driven to say something which I ought not.

Snatching up my hat, I was making for the door, when my mother, who by this time had worked herself into such a state as I had never seen her, or, at that time, any other woman in before—a sort of hysterical frenzy, sprung from her chair so as to get between me and the door, crying out, "You shall not go; you shall not leave me. You are going to see her now, you know you are. You have made an appointment with that dreadful creature for this evening I know you have!" She made a convulsive clutch at me, as I stepped back perfectly aghast and bewildered with my struggling feelings of stifled anger

and astonishment, and actually tore away a great piece out of my cambric shirt front in her hand.

I was aghast, I say ; and scarcely knowing what to do, my prominent idea being only the necessity of escape, for my own temper was now over-boiling : my mother's maid, I suppose hearing her scream out, opened the door on the other side of the room ; I bolted round the table, and so slipped out through the bedroom, and down the stairs, into the open street, but not before I had heard a wild cry—a threat so dreadful—well, never mind—it was totally unlike and foreign to her own kind loving self—but, strange to say, it did not affect me at the moment so much as it has since, when it has again and again recurred to my mind most bitterly. We have, of course, long since been reconciled, and might seem to any common observers all that a fond mother and a dutiful son should be to one another ; but from the day of that unhappy misunderstanding there has always been between us a silence on that subject—an estrangement. We have never since been quite the same as we had been up to that time ; and to all that misery and misfortune am I not entirely indebted to the baneful influence of that wretched Gorles ?—so far, I will allow, as often before, quite accidentally, and even without his own cognizance, acting upon my

destiny. If I had not met him and that accursed Contessa of his in the gallery that day, that dreadful scene, that painful estrangement, founded on an unjust suspicion on my mother's part, would never have come to pass.

"Unlucky chance," do you say? Don't tell me of chances!

CHAPTER XVI.

"Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast."

CONGREVE.

WHEN I had escaped from that sad and painful scene which I have described, I must have walked up and down and round the streets of Florence for some two or three hours, at least, without caring, thinking, or even knowing where I was, or what I was doing.

It was already quite dark, when my grief, or, I suppose I may as well say more truly, my anger, began to cool down from its high-pressure state sufficiently for my mind again to take cognizance of ordinary impressions by the straggling street lamps which were dimly lighted. Presently a few slaps of large rain-drops on my hat and coat sleeves, accompanied by a distant rumble of thunder, suggested to my natural instinct of self-preservation that, besides the fact of it getting very late, a heavy storm was working up overhead; and that having come out as I had without any overcoat or protection against such a contingency as a ducking, perhaps the sooner I found

some place of shelter from the threatening downpour the better it would be, particularly in the quasi invalid state of health in which I was still supposed to be.

I was not far, as I discovered upon looking round, from the centre of the Ponte Vecchio, where there is a space left open between the rows of little jewellers' shops which line each side of that quaint old bridge, covered overhead, however, by a long narrow passage, or "bolt-hole" of communication, between the Pitti Palace and the Uffizi; especially constructed for the use of the Grand Dukes or other powers that be, as a way of escape, whenever their misfortunes or misgovernment may, as periodically occurs, have made the place too hot to hold them, and it may be necessary, as it so often has been, to cut and run from their beloved subjects.

The said passage is carried over at the place I mention on three narrow arches, which afforded me perfect shelter from the now fast-dropping rain.

There, then, I leaned over the parapet of the bridge, watching the river, rushing as it was with tremendous force against the piers beneath me; and as I watched I felt more thoroughly miserable and low-spirited than up to that time I think I had ever felt in my life. I could not help contrasting my mother's strange and

unjust suspicions and treatment of me, with the uniform love and kindness I had up to that time always received from her—and all owing to Gorles, without hope of vengeance or redress against that arch-enemy! What had I ever done? Why should I ever have been born? By what combination of chances, or for what special end could it be, that my whole fate and destiny should at every turn be thus subjected to this hateful antagonistic influence? Why should that little monster have been sent into this world purposely, as it seemed, to cross and torment me at every turn? And so I felt it would ever be to the end. A thought of hopelessness, of desperation, came over me. Why not give it up, as a bad job, and put an end to the whole bother?—finish the struggle, in fact, with one good header into those rushing gurgling waters below? One hearty jump with a will, and it would all be over for ever!

I involuntarily looked round, to make quite sure that I was alone, and there, close at my elbow, stood a figure, who looked as if he had but that moment arrived, seeking shelter, as I myself had done, from the rain, under the arches.

He made me start, because I had no idea of any one being so near me. I had not heard the slightest sound of his approach; but the river was roaring

loudly through the bridge, and there had been, just as I turned, a tremendous roll of thunder overhead.

"Pray don't be alarmed," said the stranger, in English, "I beg you. Am I not right in supposing that I am addressing a fellow-countryman? How one always recognises an Englishman immediately, all over the world! We may indeed reckon ourselves lucky to have found this place of shelter; in a few minutes the storm will be coming down like blue blazes."

The voice, which had a would-be fashionable drawl in it, seemed familiar to me; and, just at that moment, there was a vivid flash of lightning, by which the face and figure of the speaker were rendered as visible as if it had been in broad daylight. I felt sure that I knew him perfectly, but for the life of me I couldn't put a name to him; though so certain was I that it must soon recur to me, that I avoided the *gaucherie*, which one always feels on such occasions, of confessing my stupidity.

He evidently did not perceive the real fact, as he went on talking in a familiar know-you-at-home sort of style:

"When I first saw your back there, stretching over the parapet as you were, just as I gained this shelter, I half thought it was some poor fellow, down on his

luck, meditating a bold jump, and an end to all his earthly troubles; not a bad opportunity for that little game, either, to-night. The Arno is not often so full or so rapid as it has been these last few days. As a general rule, there would be more chance of bungling your brains out, in a slovenly, unsatisfactory manner, against the gravelly bottom, than mingling your last bubbling sigh of life with the rushing current, and so, with one splash and a gurgle, whirling away into eternity."

What on earth was the fellow's name? His peculiar expression as he gave vent to this half-satirical sentiment, the drawling tones of his voice, were so familiar to me, I was quite angry with myself for my own thick-headedness.

"It is not as high as the parapet of Windsor Bridge, from which, I dare say, you have taken many a header, when you were an Eton boy," he said, looking carelessly over, down into the water.

"That is exactly what I was thinking myself," I answered, involuntarily. "I know I should strike out instinctively, and couldn't help swimming; so I should only get a ducking for nothing, and perhaps catch a deuce of a cold into the bargain."

"Oh! you were seriously thinking of it, then?"

Then I saw what a slip I had made.

"Not yet, not yet!" he cried, showing his teeth as

he laughed; "you must not allow such thoughts to get the better of you. It would be no use, only a disagreeable ducking, as you say; for you have a deal to go through, before things come to that pass. Ah! the storm is over! Good evening;" and he was gone.

Then it suddenly flashed through my mind who it must be—the identical Party himself whom the Professor had conjured up at Dresden! I felt rather flabbergasted, I confess; but it gave me a new train to my thoughts. But not caring for the chance of running against the gentleman again, I made up my mind to leave the bridge by the opposite end to that by which he seemed to have gone, and so make a "*gyro*" home, by making my way along the paved quay which they call the Lung d'Arno, and so cross the river again by the next bridge, some few hundred yards below; and thus, having reached the house where we lodged, manage, if I could, to get quietly up to my own room, without meeting my mother again that night.

I did not wish, I did not dare to meet her again till both of us should have had a night's rest to cool, and reflect upon the unfortunate misunderstanding, as it literally was, which had risen between us. Though the storm, heavy as it was, had only after all

lasted but a very few minutes, it had been sufficient to drive all the natives, who hate wet like cats, into their houses, and the streets were unusually empty and deserted.

When arrived at the nearest bridge, the Ponte Sta. Trinita, I think they call it, I could perceive a single figure loitering in the middle. Fancying it might be the same "Party" again, or at any rate actuated by a sort of nervous disinclination to meet any other mysterious individuals that evening, I turned off and kept on by the quay to the next bridge again further on below. Just as I was passing beneath the windows of one of the smaller private houses close to the great Corsini palace, I heard the notes of a piano beautifully played, and accompanying a rich contralto voice to one of the merriest rollicking airs I ever listened to in all my life. My senses were not, as you may easily judge, much in tone for those sort of feelings just at that moment; but there was something so heart-stirring, so wickedly bewitching in that *Barcarolle* as it suddenly burst out clearly over the silent street, that then and there I found every pulse in my body beating, and my feet quite going of their own accord pat to the lively music. I had never heard that tune before, and never except once again, and that was on a very remarkable occasion,

and at the very last place in the world one would have expected to do so; but it made such a vivid impression upon me that I could whistle every note of it from that time to this, and in my sleep have often and often set the jolliest songs imaginable of my own to it, and sung them too; but when the mornings come have invariably forgotten them again entirely; and what a regular nuisance that is, you know!

I was so intensely delighted and attracted by this song that I could not resist clambering up on a big stone post there was just beneath the window to catch a glimpse of the charming singer, whose voice itself was quite worthy of the song. The window was wide open, so that catching hold of the bars of the sort of cage by which all the lower casements of Italian houses are invariably defended, I balanced myself on the top of my post of observation, and could see perfectly into the room, which was one blaze of light from many candles. And there at the piano on the other side of the apartment I instantly recognised — whom do you think? La Contessa Sottonebbia herself, in magnificent full evening costume, surrounded by a large and brilliant company of many well-dressed gentlemen; but not another lady besides herself was to be seen. There was a sprinkling of white Austrian uniforms amongst them; but most

conspicuous of all, because perched upon the high centre cushions of an ottoman in the midst, was Master Gorles himself, vociferously leading the applause as the Contessa finished the rollicking song with a bang and a flourish, and then turned herself round on the pivot of her music-stool to face her justly delighted audience. Gorles was in a screaming state of ecstacy. "Brava! brava!" he yelled again and again. "Ancora! mi bella Contessa! Ancora! brava!"

"Brava!" I cried suddenly, at the top of my voice through the window bars, right into the room. It was an irresistible impulse of genuine admiration and delight, which I could not have helped, if I had known that anyone would have cut my tongue out the next minute for my rudeness.

"Brava, Contessa! pray let's have it again! By all means, I say, encore!"

Up they all jumped, as if a lighted cracker had bounced in amongst them. It was unwarrantable on may part, I cannot but own; and so I felt it to be at the time, almost even before the last words were hardly out of my mouth.

There was a momentary pause of astonishment; then some of the party rushed to the window-bars, while two or three of the white-coated swells made a

plunge at a chair in the corner, on which they had deposited their shakos and swords.

I do not think that I am boasting when I say, that if they and their weapons had been the only consideration, my pride would not have let me run away as I did, but I should have stayed to have explained and apologized, or to have taken the consequences of my unjustifiable conduct; but when I saw little Gorles spring from his high perch and make at once for the door of the apartment, that quite unnerved me. I jumped down from my post, and was off like a shot; and, as I tell you, took to a most ignominious flight. I feel ashamed, as I ought to be, while I thus make this confession of my weakness; but I know that I should do just the same if it were all to happen over again; simply because I couldn't help myself.

I was down to the corner and right across to the other side of the bridge in less than three winks, and then, being pretty well out of breath, I stopped for a minute to recover myself; when—to my horror, I discovered that I had lost one of my gloves in my flight. I had them both, I knew, when I clambered up on that post, and must have dropped it jumping down. Of course I had—and Gorles must have run out after me, and picking it up, felt that it was un-

necessary to follow in pursuit, for that he could have whoever was the delinquent entirely in his power without further trouble. Of course he had !—and then the terrible thought struck me, of how long it would be before I should again feel his infernal influence working over me !

I almost made up my mind to go back at once boldly to the house, and demand the restitution of my property, or, regardless of consequences, attempt to recover it by force. It required no little resolution to come to that point, but it was my only chance, and must be done without further delay. I had turned to recross the bridge, when I became suddenly conscious that it was already too late. It was the old feeling I had before experienced under similar circumstances at Dresden. I was trembling violently all over, and my head was beginning to whirl. It was barely three hundred yards, along the side of the river, to our own house; I might yet manage to get home. I made a strong effort to collect myself, and set off to run. For fifty paces or so I staggered along, my legs giving way under me at every step; and I was sliding along on the splashy, slippery pavement, which seemed to roll under me like a stormy sea—up again, and with a firm determination not to give in to the power which I felt more and more strongly growing over me. With

a desperate struggle and a cry for help, as of one suffocating, I fell against the door-step of our own house; and was carried up to my bed by our courier, and some native friend of his, whom I suppose he had been entertaining, and was most providentially, at that very moment, coming to let out surreptitiously from the front door.

It was two or three days before I was all right again, under the auspices of the learned Dr. Zanzani, who though an old gossip and pompous humbug knew what he was about in my case, and I have no doubt secretly demagnetized me, in the same regular manner that the Dresden Professor or *Taraxacum* would have done; though he did not choose to avow it, and indeed always pretended entirely to ignore everything of the sort.

What I rather liked in old 'Zani was, that when I got him quietly to myself he was amenable to reason, and would always listen to me. I told him exactly all that had really happened to me, and besought him to go to the house, which I described to him, and there obtain from Gorles, either by persuasion or force, that glove of mine, through means of which the little wretch would I feared be again constantly exercising his hateful influence over me.

He promised to do all he could, but told me that

now understanding the exact state of the case, if I would put entire confidence in him, he could always thwart at once any such attempts, and that I should soon grow strong and well again as ever.

As to my poor dear mother—well, these are only distressing, miserable memories; and though I have said I will tell you all, there is no use in dilating on them,—nothing would ever persuade her but that I went off from her that night to some carouse, jovial party, or, even worse, that I spent the evening with that confounded Contessa, and had returned home in a state of gross and wilful intoxication; whereas, as I have just told you, I had been mooning about the streets and bridges, without having touched anything, or spoken to a single soul, with the one exception of the Stranger on the Ponte Vecchio. Appearances were certainly most unfortunately against me, rather strong circumstantial evidence, I own; for as I gathered from old 'Zani, who told me that he had almost to force my mother to come in to see me, as I lay under the influence of Gorles's tricks that night; that when she had with evident reluctance consented to do so, no sooner had she approached my bedside, than, whether awake or in my sleep, he could hardly say, I had suddenly burst out with a wild incoherent song, following it up with expressions

of the most unbounded praise and admiration of some lady, upon whom I continued again and again to call for a repetition of her delicious and exquisite music.

From that time to this my mother has never allowed me to explain the real truth to her; even now, after this long interval of time, if I were ever to attempt to get near that unhappy subject; for I for some time afterwards laid all sorts of schemes and manœuvres so that she might be induced quietly to listen to me, and allow me to clear myself—but all in vain! I have failed again and again, for as soon as she perceives my drift and what I am at, no matter where we may happen to be, she will rise at once, and leave the room.

I tried the simple dodge of writing to her on the subject fully and explicitly; but I only received my own letter back, with a large broad ink mark right across it, about half a dozen lines down the first page, with this chilling annotation scrawled across my writing below:

"Unread, further than this mark, as soon as the unhappy subject was ascertained. Why persist in these dreadful falsehoods? See Acts," such and such a chapter and verse. I forget the number exactly, but I know they referred to the story of Ananias and Sapphira.

Yes, it is a miserable thought, but it is a fact, that it was a foolish thoughtless speech of my own, of course acting involuntarily under the same infernal influence, which gave what I may call its final hopeless clencher to that unlucky and most mistaken view of my dear mother's.

You see old 'Zany certainly behaved like a trump in the matter. As he would always listen to me freely, I easily convinced him of the real state of the case.

He really did his best to act as ambassador and peacemaker between us; but my mother never would allow even him to enter into details or particulars of explanation, until the old fellow, really from pure good nature, hit upon what must of course have seemed a very simple, but, as it turned out, most unfortunate scheme for satisfactorily proving my innocence.

He had talked to her, he told me, so seriously, and so far impressed her with his own firm conviction that I could satisfactorily clear myself, that she had at last owned that she should only be too delighted if she could herself be convinced of the same; and he had thought of a scheme, and engaged that she should be quite satisfied. With which little preface, he produced a formal declaration, written out on a sheet of paper in my mother's own hand, to this effect:

"I, Francis Lambard, do hereby declare upon my sacred oath and word, as a Christian hoping for mercy hereafter as I shall now speak the truth before my God, that on the night of Tuesday, October (whatever it was), I did not while I was out from home either see the Countess Sottonebbia in her own home, or hear her sing, or in any other way hold any communication with her."

(To be signed.)

"Well, but, doctor," I said, just for the sake of something to say, "I cannot sign that, you know; because, as I have told you, I not only did see the counfounded woman in what, I suppose, was her own house, but did hear her sing that particular song, which, as you tell me, I have been singing ever since; and *elle chantait à ravir, il n'y a point de doute.*"

I had not time to say more, or of course I should have gone on to explain how, in the true spirit of the declaration, I could conscientiously put my name to it like a man, though not as it happened in the letter; but with that foolish quibble in my mind, no sooner were those unlucky words out of my lips, than with a frightful scream my poor mother rushed out from behind the curtain, and dropped in a swoon upon the floor as flat as a flounder.

As bad luck would have it, you see, she, woman-like, had in her impatience followed the doctor into the room without his knowing it; being, as he said, already half convinced, hoping to be satisfied and ready to rush upon me, her boy, and inundate my neck and shoulders with tears of reconciliation, and contrition for her injustice.

But that was all up now; and though I nursed her and watched over her, and did everything I could think of by dutiful attention and care to repay in part, at least, the kindness and affection with which she had tended me through my illness, and to win back her love and confidence, which up to that time had always been so strong, it has never been the same thing again. As time has gone on we are now, thank Heaven, always cordial, and generally on fond terms, as a mother and son should be; but never, as I have told you, quite the same.

CHAPTER XVII.

LETTERS OFFICIALLY AND OFFICIOUSLY DELAYED.

You may well imagine that under such circumstances my days at Florence, and I am afraid those of my dear mother also (but still that was not my fault) were not of the happiest or most comfortable. For my part, I should have been glad of a change anywhere, but circumstances constrained us to remain on where we were.

In the first place, it was considered advisable, if not absolutely necessary, for me to remain under the immediate care of Dr. Zanzani, who had so wonderfully brought me through my illness, though I now began to feel myself well and strong again almost as ever. I could never prevail on the doctor, by the way, to tell me what my illness had really been. He always looked very mysterious, and evaded my questions by cautions for the future.

Besides that reason against our moving, there was the perhaps equally good, or even better one, if the

whole truth must be told, that our finances had run rather low; and though I suppose my mother could easily have procured an advance from the bankers, yet my father had made no arrangements for her doing so, as, when he had been obliged to start off so suddenly for England upon family business, he had not expected to have been detained beyond a fortnight or so at the utmost; though it was now going on nearly seven weeks, and my mother had not even received a letter from him for some time. My father was by habit anything but a regular correspondent; but as each morning arrived, and no letter, I saw that my mother was growing more fidgetty about him.

I could not get from her even a hint of what all this important family business was about; indeed, she would not be confidential about anything. She had to a certain degree resumed her naturally polite and gentle manner towards me; but not more so than it would have been with any other person in whose society she might have been living; so I on my part drew in my horns like the long-suffering snail; and having experienced one or two quiet, but very chilling rebuffs, took care not to lay myself open to more of that sort of thing than I could help.

It was certainly a weary time, and I was very unhappy. I did not care now to go out anywhere; I

lost all pleasure in seeing or doing anything. I hardly stirred outside the house; the old dread of meeting Gorles again in the streets, or anywhere about, and of his bringing fresh miseries upon me, again overshadowed me even with redoubled force.

But I determined to bear my lot as quietly and patiently as I could, though at times it was hard enough to do so; but I tried not to put myself in the wrong. Sometimes I was almost inclined to pack up my traps and be off, I didn't seem to care where, if I could only get away somewhere for a change. But I hadn't a stiver of money in my pocket; and besides, I could not, you know, unkindly and unjustly as she was treating me, quite make up my mind to leave my mother all by herself in a strange city, with no one to take care of her. So our days dragged on, slowly and miserably enough, and still no letters, and my mother was growing more and more uneasy.

It was on a Saturday, I remember, that, looking up suddenly across the breakfast table at which we were sitting moodily, as was now our general wont, only rather later that morning even than usual, "Frank," said my mother, "I wish to goodness you would go yourself for me to the post-office, and see whether there is really no letter from your father. Furfanti (that was our courier's name) has just come

back, and declares that there is nothing again; but those servants are so careless. I wish, my dear boy, you would just go and inquire for me yourself." There was a tone of warmth and loving earnestness in my mother's voice, which was more like her own dear self than there had been since our row, which touched me to the heart.

"Yes, dearest mother," I cried, quite cheerily; "I will be off directly, of course. There is nothing I wont do to please you if you will only give me one of your old loving kisses, and tell me that you don't really believe me to be the profligate and story-teller you have been making me out to be." I saw in an instant what a fool I had been thus to presume upon what I had fancied was a change of feeling. It was an involuntary slip on her part of natural affection, but not for me, though; and the hardness of her eye, and extreme coldness of her next words, told me at once what a mistake I had made. I ought to have had the tact not to have pretended to have noticed that momentary weakness. She might herself not have perceived it, and checked it as she did immediately in the bud. "For your father's sake," she said, with a special stress, "I shall feel much obliged if you will take that trouble for me, for I am becoming really very anxious."

I am not sure that it was not for a moment a hard matter to choke down the ugly word that rose in my throat as, ramming my hat down over my eyes, I hastened out of the room ; and scarcely allowing myself even to think, was soon across the Ponte Vecchio, and turning into that irregular great space known as the Piazza Gran Duca, on the sunny side of which is, or was in those days, situated the post-office.

As I came nearer, I was a little surprised to perceive that the small orifice or trap door in the grated window through which communications are, or then used to be, made with the official within, and which at the outside might have measured about a foot square, was entirely blocked up by the body of some youth of the upper class, as far as one could judge from a pair of well-dressed and well-booted legs and feet, the violent kickings and contortions of which said extremities betokened a desperate struggle, in which the remaining and invisible portion of the said person was evidently engaged with some antagonist, probably, and as it proved to be, the lawful denizen of the public bureau within.

I was just in time, as, wondering what was up, I ran to the spot, to witness the whole body come bundling out in a heap on to the pavement below, bringing with him a perfect avalanche of letters, which

fell round him in all directions; then came flying out a small hat, but nearly battered out of all shape or recognition, close after which appeared a very flushed and furious countenance, uttering the most frightful volley of oaths and maledictions. This was no other than the outraged official himself, who, stretching his head suddenly through his little portal at the imminent risk of excoriating his own ears, in his vehemence, anathematized the defeated Gorles as he lay wriggling on the stones beneath him.

For Gorles himself it was, in a most dilapidated condition. The collar of his coat seemed to have changed places with the tails, which were twisted somehow round his neck, his shirt front and handkerchief were torn to ribbons, and large tufts of his ruffled hair appeared to have been tugged out by the roots; even his bitterest enemy could hardly have wished to see him under more grievous circumstances. There were not above half-a-dozen witnesses to this extraordinary scene besides myself; but amongst them a middle-aged gentleman of transatlantic origin, as I guessed by his twang and very forcible mode of expressing himself, who appeared diverted beyond all measure, and informed me that there had been an almost regular daily contest between that phosphorical little Britisher and the functionary for some time past, from

the former always insisting upon being allowed to look over the whole of the letters addressed to the *Poste-restante* himself; but that he calculated that upon this particular morning matters had reached a climax; and, rot his old grandmother! (who for the matter of that had been dead and buried these ten years in Kentucky, but had lived to ninety, and was tough as an old hoss,) but dang his vitals! if in all that time he had ever seen anything to whip that, which he would not have missed, he guessed, no—not for whole boots full of dollars.

Thus was the delighted Yankee giving vent to his feelings when Gorles, gathering himself up from off the pile of letters which he had brought out with him in his ignominious descent, turned with a malicious snarl upon him, apostrophizing him as a giggling hyena, and asking what the deuce he meant by insulting him.

Just as he was thus picking himself up, my eye suddenly caught the direction of one of the covers in the heap lying uppermost on the ground, addressed to my mother, and almost close by it another to myself. I was in the very act of stooping for them, when my arm was suddenly seized by the official, who had banged-to his little port-hole and rushed round to the front to secure his scattered letters.

In an instant he had gathered them all up from under my very nose, and giving Gorles's hat, which still lay temptingly within reach, an extra scrunch with his heel, was back again round in his office before I had recovered my surprise.

It was in vain that the American and I applied for our letters; declaring that we were both accomplices of that diavolino Inglese, as he called him, the enraged official utterly declined even to listen to our demands, and when we persisted, only threatened to send for the police.

Naturally we stormed and protested, and then tried persuasion; but all means were equally without effect.

We tried the dodge of going away for a while and then coming back in half an hour, to knock again respectfully, as if entirely fresh and unimplicated strangers. It was not the least use. He knew us at once, and slammed the little door against our noses, which he opened again in an instant, only, however, to derisively inform us that it had just struck twelve o'clock, and happening to be a *mezza festa*, or half-holiday, the post-office was now closed according to custom, and so would continue to be, not only over the next day, Sunday, but through the Monday also, being a *festa* or saint's day; and therefore that our earliest possible chance, if even then, upon due con-

sideration he might think fit to let us have our letters, would not certainly be till the next morning after; and so saying he barred up the window, came out and locked the door, and walked off deliberately with the key in his pocket.

My newly-made Yankee friend was perfectly rampant in his wrath. Again and again in loud tones did he *dang* not only many of his ancestral and collateral relatives, quick, and dead likewise, as far as I could judge by some of his allusions to them, but himself especially, for having been so thoughtless and unlucky as to have come out that morning without either his rec-vol-verre or his blessed bowie knife, by a judicious use of either of which, he calculated that official might have been induced to hear reason. But go he would, slick up to the Pitti Palace, and jist ask to see the Grand Duke himself on the subject; and by hookey, he guessed he would jist let that old hoss know what sort of a tarnation son of a stock-dollager he had got in his post-office.

It was a most annoying thing, certainly, thus to know that there really was a letter for my mother, anxiously waiting as she was for one, and yet be thus prevented from getting possession of it; all through the fault and folly of another person, too. And that other person was, of course, always the same; the

same—not luck or chance, as I was going to say,—but the same inevitable fate haunting me over again and again.

Now that Gorles was mixed up in the matter, simple as it might be, I felt certain that something dreadful was going to happen to me. For I have not told you all yet of this letter adventure. I had tried to keep quite clear of, and while I was arguing with the postman had pretended not even to notice Gorles as he picked himself up, and slunk off, exchanging anything but compliments with the American, who certainly returned him as good as he gave, till he vanished round the corner.

What, then, was my astonishment when I at last returned home, unable to gain my object, as I have described, and proportionately riled and disappointed, to find Gorles on his tiptoes, in the act of trying to reach the bell-pull at the door of our lodgings!

"Oh," said he, as I came up, "is that you? I have got something here for you—a letter for your mother, Mrs. Lambard. I have had it in my pocket these four or five days, and had quite forgotten it; but seeing you this morning at the post-office reminded me of it. The fact is, you see, I caught sight of it among a lot of others at the post-office a few minutes after your servant had gone the other day, and I myself had

heard that rascally fellow tell him there was nothing for his lady, or for you; but you never can trust the scoundrels, and ought always to insist upon seeing for yourself—that was what all that scrimmage was about this morning."

"I am obliged to you," I answered as civilly as I could manage to do, "but, all the same, I wish you had left it alone; my mother has suffered much from anxiety which this might have spared her."

"Well, but that is the very point: I meant her to have got it sooner, you see; and as I had had the honour of making her acquaintance, I thought it would be only a polite opportunity to come and call, so I put it in my pocket, meaning to bring it at once, but, unluckily, it went quite out of my head; and then we went for a little excursion down to Lucca, with the Contessa di Sottonebbia and some other charming friends, and the fact is, only returned late last evening; but better late than never, you know. But is madame your lady mother at home? for I should like to have the honour of presenting it, and apologizing to her in person."

The cool impudence of the animal positively took my breath away.

"No," I said; "she is not at home; never is; but give me the letter, if you please." And without

another word I walked in and straight upstairs with it to my mother, leaving him to digest my rudeness as he liked upon the door-step.

Four or five days he said he had had it; it must have been more.

It was from my poor father, written in high spirits, particularly at having received such a good account of myself and my steady recovery of health. Indeed it was, as I could perceive, an answer to one despatched by my mother, on the very morning of that unlucky rencontre at the Uffizi; and what an unhappy change had come over the whole spirit of our life since!

"The family business," his letter went on to say, "would all end right, and be brought to a satisfactory arrangement. That he hoped to be able to start the next day from London, and to arrive at Florence (not intending to stop for a single hour *en route*) almost at the same time with or within a very few hours after this letter itself."

There was a postscript which specially concerned myself.

"I am quite delighted at your excellent account of Frank, and am glad that he seems to take the great interest which you describe in all the pictures, frescoes, sculptures, and other works of art. I wish you would desire him to write me a good long letter himself, on

that or any other subject which may especially occur to him: but as I shall not be sure of my whereabouts, he had better put his letter under cover, marked *private,* to Mr. Wyley, my lawyer. It will please and gratify me, and may prove of great importance to himself. I will explain this when we meet."

It was a very queer fancy, and to this day I never can quite make out what it meant, unless he had been backing my orthographical powers, and had a bet with his solicitor, who was, I knew, a very intimate friend, upon the subject.

But I do not think it puzzled me so much at the time as it might have done, for when we came to consider the date of the letter, there was something else to think about. My heart instantly misgave me: the date was October the 19th, and this was the 30th.

If he had started as he intended, and come express, even allowing for the delay occasioned by the steamer not suiting exactly, he ought to have arrived here three days since at the very latest.

Perhaps those other letters which I had caught sight of, but which had been confiscated, might explain the cause of his delay, or change in his plans; but though my glimpse at them had been hasty, I felt sure that neither of them were directed in my father's handwriting.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"Bad news is better than no news, though no news is better than good news."—*Old saying.*

I DID not like to communicate my half-conceived misgivings to my mother; and though I noticed the colour on her cheek blanche, perhaps being conscious of her chilling injustice towards myself, she could not quite bring herself to confide her secret terrors to me.

Calling to mind the thousand and one hindrances which may always arise and cause delay in an intended journey, I do not think I should at once have felt so uneasy, if it had not been for the fact of Gorles being again mixed up with the matter. It was entirely his confounded officiousness which had intercepted that letter; though of course, upon reflection, I had to own that that fact could have nothing in the world to do with my father's non-arrival.

I made up my mind that I must somehow get those letters from the *Poste-restante*, in spite of the outraged official, or the absurd regulations in regard to

the *festa* of which he had so unluckily availed himself, to punish me, as I suppose he really believed, deservedly, for aiding and abetting in the attack upon him in his own fastness.

So I started off for the Chancellerie of our English minister, to see if I could get any help in that quarter.

We had met the minister once or twice; and his Excellency had been particularly civil to my mother and myself; besides, one of the younger attachés, Tripper, was an old friend of mine, having been, as I dare say you remember, at my tutor's at Eton—about your standing, wasn't he?

When I walked in I found them all busy, as usual, reading the English papers, and discussing the last-arrived news, as is of course the duty of well-regulated diplomatists to do.

"Halloa, I say!" broke out young Tripper, all at once, after civilly pointing with his toe to his own vacant chair, he himself being seated in the middle of a blotting-book, on the table, gracefully swinging his legs; "here is something like a smash on one of the French railways—the Boulogne and Paris line—with I don't know how many, killed, wounded, and broken into little pieces. It is not often that the French try to rival us in a good out-and-out

catastrophe of this sort, but here they have quite succeeded. The old story, of course—delay of steamers, making up lost time, mistaken signals, inefficient pointsmen; two opposite trains, both express, on the same line of rails, going "hard-all" into one another, with a frightful loss of life, which is only worthy of, and makes my poor exiled heart yearn with the memories of my beloved native land. But they have rivalled us this time, and no mistake; between fifty and sixty passengers, several English amongst them, all first-class—of course they were,—eleven taken out lifeless, from fifteen to twenty more or less severely wounded, five not expected to survive! There is not even mention of it in the French papers, by which we might and ought to have known all this at least three days ago."

"Oh!" said one of the other fellows (the secretary I think he was), "I remember now there was a paragraph, mentioning the vague report of some tremendous accident, in the *Times* which arrived the day before yesterday. What day was it? Yes, to be sure, the 21st it must have been, and was in the Saturday's paper. I don't suppose we should have heard anything more about it, if it had not been for the number of English among the killed and wounded. Good heavens, sir! what is the matter?

Tripper, quick there, confound you! Look to your friend!"

* * * * * * * *

When I came to myself they were pouring cold water over my face and down my throat, while the secretary, who was a thick-set fellow, was holding me up on the chair. Tripper and the other attaché had pulled off the buttons of my shirt collar, and the former was fanning my face violently with the blotting book on which he had been sitting.

There were only half-a-dozen or so names given of those who had been as yet recognised among the killed, and my father's name was not amongst that list; but the account went on to state that there were many whose identity had not yet been ascertained, and it was quite evident that the account itself had been sent second-hand by some correspondent in Paris, and not from any one who had himself witnessed or even knew any particulars of the catastrophe.

It was on the strength of this that my friends tried kindly to reassure me, and to give me hopes that after all my father had not been perhaps even in that particular train; or at any rate may have been amongst those who had escaped unhurt; and though perhaps shaken, and delayed on his journey, would arrive safe after all.

But I had an internal conviction from the first that all such hopes were unfounded, and that he was amongst those who were injured, perhaps killed on the spot.

Those two letters of which I had caught a glimpse, addressed to my mother and myself in a strange hand, were now explained, and I never for an instant doubted would confirm our most fearful anticipations. I implored them to lose no time in aiding me by an official application through their chief himself to the Minister of the Postes, to procure them for me at once; and in the meantime making a strong effort to rouse and control my own feelings, I set off home, to get back at once to my poor mother, knowing, of course, that the dreadful news must be broken to her; though dreading and hardly knowing how to set about that painful task.

My heart had utterly refused to entertain the faintest shadow of hope while at the Chancellerie; but as I returned home, and was almost approaching our own door, it occurred to me that perhaps after all he might not have been there, or might have escaped; and until I was sure beyond all doubt, would it not be cruel to overwhelm, to crush down my poor mother, as of course I knew I should, with the same alarm and forebodings which I myself was

struggling against, perhaps after all, without cause. "No news, you know, is good news," the youngest attaché had suggested, as I was leaving their room; meaning, as I knew, with that trite old proverb to offer the best comfort he could.

But then those letters at the post-office! at any rate, I thought, I would return and wait till I could see what they would bring: after all, they might not confirm, or perhaps even dispel, my worst fears.

So back I went all the way to the Chancellerie; and was rather disgusted, I remember, at finding them discussing some other topic of interest which had also occupied a prominent column in the papers, and I can tell you even now what the subject of their discussion was: it was the public reception of Kossuth, the great Hungarian demagogue, on his arrival at Southampton, and again in London.

They seemed to me to be a set of heartless hypocrites, for I thought they really had sympathized and entered into my own fearful anxiety and grief; but I suppose I did them wrong: as long as I was with them they really had felt kindly and sorrowfully with me; but when I was gone, why should they care more than any other people who were not personally interested in the calamity? But at the time it hurt me sorely; and merely asking permis-

sion to sit down and wait till an answer could be received to the official application for my letters, I did not care to speak a single word, or pay the least attention to them, each advocating his own special opinion as they were, at the top of their voices, and all talking at once.

It seemed to me like hours and hours, four or five, or even six I should have said; but it really was a considerable time, and with no small trouble, and sending backwards and forwards no end of correspondence, before I at length gained possession of the recovered letters.

They were both from the same person, signing himself Sam Harriton, or some such name; the one which was addressed to my mother merely briefly stating that my father had been severely injured in a railway collision near Abbeville, but not dangerously so, and had been taken in, with some others rescued from the same catastrophe, to a private house, not far from the railway; that the writer having happily escaped entirely unhurt, had been able to give some assistance to those who were less fortunate than himself; and as soon as General Lambard had sufficiently recovered to be able to say who he was, and to what friends or relatives he might wish to announce the mischance which had befallen him, had lost no time

in communicating at once according to his desire to our address at Florence.

The second letter, which had evidently started by a day's post later, though they seemed only to have arrived together, was to me, and I was happy to see written from the dictation of my father himself, merely telling the fact of the accident, without any particulars, beyond that he had badly fractured one arm, and had received, he had reason to fear, some serious internal injury, besides suffering severely from the shock; and that it would be a great comfort to him, if both my mother and myself would set out at once, and go to him with as little delay as possible.

Now knowing the worst, as I made all possible haste home, I was trying in my mind to arrange how I should break the awful news; for, as I have already said, manage it as I might, I knew what a fearful blow it must be to her who was there waiting anxiously for me.

CHAPTER XIX.

ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES.

Welcome the coming, speed the parting, guest.

On opening the outer door of our apartments, I was surprised to find the whole of the vestibule, or small entrance, occupied by a huge box, on which was seated a female figure, muffled up and swathed in many shawls and coverings; while the battered form of her headgear, from which some straggling locks hung down in anything but graceful tresses, betokened unmistakeably all the many discomforts and disarrangements of a voyage.

"Holloa!" I cried, "who have we here? Who may you please to be waiting for, ma'am?"

She turned to reply. To my immense astonishment I recognised Harrison, my aunt Mrs. De Lorme's maid.

"Why, where on earth have you turned up from?" I inquired, as soon as I had recovered my surprise, which almost took my breath away. "Is your young lady—is Miss Katie come to Florence?"

Why is it, I again repeat, that when our feelings have been most shocked and strained with any real grief, they are at the same time always so keenly susceptible to a sense of the ridiculous?

I was really ashamed of being such an unfeeling brute, as I caught myself going off into one of my screams of laughter as Mrs. Harrison, in the most dismal tones, answered—

"Ah, Mr. Frank, you may well say turned up, indeed!—turned inside out from my very knee-pans, for all the world like an old kid-glove, would be no more than the truth, after the awful night I've passed on them tempestuous ocean waves between Ginever, where we come from last night, to what's the name of the place, where all them best English straw bonnets and hats are made:—turned up, indeed, I have been, and no mistake! Why, if some one had just took and tossed me over the steam-packet's side, I think I should have been ready to thank him on my bended knees for his kindness in putting me out of my misery. Miss Katie!—oh, she ain't here, bless your heart—but missus only, come all alone, leastways bringing me for my sins with her; and come too seemingly not before she is really wanted. But Lor', dear Mr. Frank, this is awful news indeed which we have brought along with us! and for goodness gracious's sake make

haste to go in, for I have heard your poor dear mamma through the wall, not the keyhole, a crying out for you between her sobs again and again."

Mrs. De Lorme had arrived sure enough, and so saved me from the painful duty which I had been so much dreading. She and her husband, the colonel, with their family, had, as it seemed, after trying one place and another in the north of Italy, finally settled themselves at Genoa. Quite by chance the colonel had met with some old acquaintance who had himself been in the accident, but had escaped scot free, and so continued his route for Italy with not more than a few hours delay. He had given an account of having seen, amongst other people, my poor father, whom he knew by sight, but not personally, taken out from beneath the broken carriages, and laid on one side amongst the dead. No sooner had my uncle brought home this dreadful news, than his wife, like an affectionate and impulsive creature, as, to give her her due, she certainly was, insisted upon setting off immediately, and coming on under the convoy of the gentleman who had brought the news, to comfort and support her sister in her terrible affliction. It was she, who thus bursting in upon my mother unexpectedly, and of course making sure that the bad news had already reached us, bad as they were, actually brought

a much worse account of the sad affair than really was the case.

It nearly killed my poor mother on the spot—but there I must pass over that dreadful time; I never can bear to think of it. The two letters which I had brought with me, so far from dealing the heavy blow I had been anticipating, were now, of course in comparison, almost an alleviation, and source of fresh hope to us. But I must tell you how my aunt treated me.

It struck me when upon finding her by my mother's bedside, as of course I did, that she received my greeting and thanks for her prompt arrival rather coldly; but we were all in such a state of excitement, and confubuscation of grief and fright, that I did not take so much notice of her manner towards me at first, until having come out into the other room, I did not think it would have been out of place, even under the circumstances, to grasp her two hands, which, in the warmth of my gratitude and joy at seeing her again, I was endeavouring to kiss.

I had been really fond of her, though she used sometimes to bore me, and cause me to laugh at her in my sleeve; still we had always been on the best of terms, which made it all the harder to bear and even understand, when, drawing herself up very

stiffly, and in a tone of the most freezing dignity, she said—

"No thank you, sir; keep your distance, if you please. I only wonder that, after your conduct towards your poor mother, of which I have received a full account, coupled with the protestations and pretensions of only a few months since, you can even dare to look me, or any of my family, in the face. Brought hither as I have been by my affectionate solicitude for my unfortunate sister, I had almost hoped to find you keeping out of the way altogether, as indeed you were when I arrived, and have been for so many hours since the morning, with some of your evil chosen associates, no doubt, whose company is more lively and more suited to your degraded tastes, than what you find in this house of mourning. With me, at least, pray never expect to be admitted on our old terms of intimacy."

I was perfectly thunderstruck. It really was a very good thing for me that there was so much to be done, and settled, and thought about, or I really think I should have been driven by their injustice to have done something desperate.

I had been longing in my heart to hear some tidings of Katie; I had hoped that at least she would have told me how she was going on, and whether she

was well and happy again. The presence of one who had so lately come from the dear girl's society, had, in spite of all other overwhelming feelings, rekindled in an instant all my love and yearning for their old object, which had never for a moment ceased or changed, but as my mother, even when we had been fast friends, never would allow me to get upon that one subject with her, I had been obliged to keep them bottled up to myself.

There was Harrison,—unfeeling as it seemed, and as I was conscious it was, towards my own father in his peril; selfish as it was, I could not help it; the chance of just hearing something of her from anyone who had so lately been with her, was not to be resisted.

I found that faithful abigail still sitting on the big box. Whether she felt it to be her stern duty to stick to that post, as finding herself cast among strangers of suspicious character, or whether she did not consider that she had as yet been officially invited to enter within by our domestics, with sufficient ceremony, I know not, but there she was still sitting.

"Harrison," I began, without any preface or circumlocution, "for Heaven's sake do tell me directly something about your young lady, Miss Katie. Is she all well again, and quite recovered her spirits and

beauty, after that strange and terrible illness she went through? Come, tell me all about her."

Harrison looked hard at me for several seconds, without uttering a word, and then gave one of her great sniffs.

How well I remembered those abominable sniffs of hers, at Dresden; and how merrily poor Katie used to laugh at me when I complained of that propensity, or used to attempt to imitate it myself. I cannot help suspecting that Mrs. Harrison had taken the cue for her behaviour towards me, from having listened to—no, overheard—her mistress, through the wall, which, like many of those old Italian houses, was not an inch under a foot and a half solid stone;—"not the keyhole," as I think I have already mentioned, she had taken the trouble to explain with special emphasis.

"Come, Mrs. Harrison," I said, coaxingly; "I thought you and I had parted the best friends at any rate; don't you remember how fondly you hugged me for being the means of restoring the dar—— your dear young lady to life again?"

She perpetrated another formidable sniff before she replied.

"Ho! Mr. Frank, you will have much to answer for. How can you really abear to be thinking about

anythink at this here 'awful season, excepts of the accident of your poor unfortunate pa ?"

And not another word could I get out of her. She would only sniff at me. Her rebuke was not undeserved; she was right, no doubt. It was too awful to allow any other thought but that one of my poor father's danger to occupy a place in my mind. I felt very guilty, and reproached myself, while I at the very time could only plead in self excuse,—How could I help it ?

But in the meantime there was much to be done, what with passports, money, (the Colonel had been thoughtful enough to provide for that emergency, and had sent us letters of credit on his own bankers,) and but short time for doing it all.

It was arranged that I should set out at once for Leghorn by that night's train, so as to catch a steamer which we found would be leaving that port the next morning at eight o'clock for Genoa and Marseilles; and I was to go on, night and day without stopping, to Abbeville, in hopes of finding my poor father still alive. We clung to the hope of finding him by that time, perhaps, recovered, and after all not so severely injured as had at first been supposed.

My mother, it was decided, should go by Spezzia, and the land route to Genoa, with her sister, and there

remain with the De Lormes until she should receive further accounts, either by letter or telegraph, from me.

Poor thing! She was quite wild to come off at once with me; but in the state she was, it would have been utterly impossible for her to have endured the journey to its end. That year the route over Mont Cenis was already reported to be stopped earlier than usual by the snow, and the railway in those days was opened no further southwards from Paris than to Chalons. It was all diligence work from Marseilles, and at that season of the year terribly rough work that was.

The earnest and affectionate persuasions of my aunt, whose kindness, even in spite of her unfair treatment of myself I could not but so far appreciate, at length had prevailed, representing, as she plainly did to my poor mother, that she would too probably break down, and have to stop upon the road, and thus only add to the miseries and embarrassments of our already existing misfortunes.

CHAPTER XX.

AN OLD FRIEND IN A NEW GUISE.

HAVING been through it yourself, you of course remember all the bustle, and hurry, and confusion, which one has to struggle through in embarking by small boats on board a steamer, from any of those Italian ports. It is bad enough even nowadays, but nothing to what it used to be a few years ago under the Austrian *régime* in Italy, when there was the gauntlet to be run of gendarmerie, port-officials, health-officials, and all the rest of them; with your passports and certificates to be viséd and counter-viséd, and all their botherations, not to speak of legions of unlicensed porters howling over, and fighting for, every separate article of your luggage; the exorbitance of whose threatened demands were only equalled by those of the rascally boatman, into whose mercies they delivered you, upon whose will it entirely depended whether the victims of their extortion should, or should not, reach the steamer before it started.

I was in a fierce altercation with the scoundrel who had brought me out, with a boat full of other travellers, and had now followed me up on deck, fiercely demanding exactly four times the sum which he had, just before my very eyes, received with thanks from three Italian gentlemen, who had each brought with him a load of baggage weighing two or three times as much as my single, partly-packed portmanteau.

I had offered him the same, which was rejected with scorn, and was in all the hubbub of resisting the barefaced insult, as I felt it to be, as well to my sense as nationality, when I received a heavy slap on the back, and heard myself heartily saluted by name.

Turning round, I saw my old friend De Lyons—"*Taraxacum*"—himself, in *propriâ personâ*. Without another word he took the money from my hand, and holding it out to the boatman, opened upon him a volley of the most awful sounding and incomprehensible jargon, in some unknown tongue. I don't think it was German, and I am quite sure it was neither French nor Italian. It sounded, perhaps, more than anything else, like a string of hard geographical names. Whatever it was, it came forth in such an uninterrupted torrent, accompanied by the most hideous grimaces and gesticulations, while his arms were whirling round with the violence of a windmill,

that the man, accepting the proffered pauls, vanished down the side of the steamer in dismay.

"Well this is of all rum goes the chief of *rum-muns*," he cried, having achieved this signal victory. "Who in life would ever have dreamt of falling in with you again thus unexpectedly! But where do you now tumble from, and what has brought you down to these parts of the world? But bless me, old fellow, you have become as thin as a marrow-spoon, and you don't seem to have altogether been enjoying rude health lately. But, to be sure, of course you were most awfully ill, and nearly a case of croaker, when you were taken away from Dresden, and I had heard that you had gone down southwards for your health; but seeing you so suddenly, drove it all out of my head."

I told him that I, on my part, had, I thought, more right to be astonished, and certainly should never have thought of meeting him down there; but I hardly know why not.

"Oh, as to that, you need never take the trouble to be astonished at meeting me anywhere; particularly in my new line of life."

"What may that be?" I asked.

Taraxacum's countenance assumed a most serio-comic expression. He looked round as if afraid of

being overheard, drew close to me, and whispered mysteriously in my ear, '*ein Reisende*,' *un commis-voyageur*; 'a commercial gent,' if you must have it in plain English. Yes, sir," he went on, drawing himself up to his full height, and smiting his breast; "I who can count crowned heads among my ancestors, nursed in the lap of luxury, educated at Eton, where among the young lordlings and millionaires of the proudest aristocracy of Europe, I held my own with the best of them, have not been too proud to turn my attention and great talents to the development of commerce; and beg leave in my new capacity, to present you, as an old and valued friend, with one of the cards of the much-respected firm of Weichkopf, Zehewaklen, and Company. But, seriously, the place was offered me most disinterestedly by a man who has always been most civil and kind to me. The salary is very fair, the trouble next to nothing, and all my expenses paid: travelling about from one country to another suits me exactly; so I think you will agree with me that I should have been a great fool if I had not, as I did, put my pride in my pocket, and accepted the chance with thanks.

"You remember my Rosina at Dresden; to be sure, I myself told you all about it. Well, when I say *my* Rosina, I ought, perhaps, to have rather called her,

Rosina, who ought to have been mine, but through untoward circumstances became Rosina Weichkopf, the wife of that eminent citizen, who, besides performing the arduous duties of chiropodist, or, as I think I remember telling you on a former occasion, of '*königliche-oberhof-leichdorn-schneider*,' to the court at Dresden, also does a considerable business in gloves, Naples soap, and general perfumery; besides the humbler branches of *bijouterie*. It was to use my natural and refined taste in the selection of a consignment of coral ornaments, that I have been sent expressly all the way down to Naples, from whence I am now returning, and am on my way up to Paris.

"After you left Dresden, I was, you see, a good deal thrown with, and became extremely intimate with, the worthy man Weichkopf, quite the received *enfant de maison*. I gradually got into the habit of dining at their plain but hospitable table, without even going through what would have been, indeed, the mere empty form of waiting for an invitation; and I had less compunction in finding myself on that footing, and thus waving all ceremony with them, because—though of course never mentioned in so many words—there was very soon established between us a tacit system of reciprocity, of which the advantages

by no means, if closely considered, would be found preponderating altogether on my side.

"Weichkopf, you see, though a most worthy fellow, is, unfortunately, in regard to his manners, appearance, and general range of ideas, *bourgeois* in extreme. He is sadly lacking in refinement, and has just honest sense enough to be aware of his deficiency. I think and feel sure that very soon after making my acquaintance, he perceived and appreciated the natural superiority that birth and education had given me, and determined, by close association and example, to improve and raise himself if he could nearer to the level of his own wife; for he must from the very first have perceived that he was no fit equal, or companion to Rosina. Though, of course, still very short of the mark, I flatter myself that he decidedly improved under my constant companionship, and occasional friendly hints; and having undertaken the task, I really became interested in its development, and so—although at times bored by the man himself, yet his dinners were good, and his house comfortable; besides, for the sake of my old feeling for Rosina herself—I was not unwilling to sacrifice some part at least of my time for her, whose life, poor girl! must otherwise have been intolerable if left solely to the society of so vulgar and uncongenial a companion, as the husband

whom her ill-judging parents had inflicted upon the poor creature.

"I was perfectly happy, and should have gone on contentedly with the same state of things till the end of time, or, what was much the same thing, until I had fulfilled my object to my own satisfaction, of making a gentleman of the well-meaning Weichkopf. But some of his relations, jealous, I suppose, of his close friendship with anyone so superior to themselves, or else fearing my growing influence in his establishment, did their best to poison his mind against me. There was an old she-cat of a mother of his, who was always particularly spiteful, and she made herself so very disagreeable, that I told Rosina fairly that either that old termagant must be forbid the house, or I must cease to be expected there. Then in short there was a regular row and disturbance, and the whole place turned topsy-turvy, which is exactly what those old she-cats delight in doing.

"And so, just at that time a vacancy among the travellers for their business happening to occur, Weichkopf—not, as you may imagine, without some hesitation and beating about the bush—ventured to offer me the post. I was not sorry for an excuse thus to get clear out of the discomfort and shindy. I wished to show Weichkopf himself that I bore no

malice against him personally, for it was not his fault, I knew; but, besides that, I happened to know, through Rosina, that the old mother had been trying all she could to get the very appointment for a young scamp of a nephew of her own, so the pleasure of selling her decided me, and I accepted it off-hand, and I find it suits me admirably. The fact is, the house which I thus honour by serving, have, I believe, already found out that in this, like in everything else—to make a good commercial gent, I mean, which is in plain English what I really am—there is nothing like a thoroughbred one after all."

CHAPTER XXI.

A MODERN ÆNEAS.

"Now then, the anchor's up, the steam is on, and off she goes," said *Taraxacum*, as our vessel began to move slowly. "Look! there's a lark; two more shore boats coming off with passengers at the last moment. They will have a tough pull for it; see how the little chap is gesticulating, and the boat behind has a woman in it; and her luggage must be left behind her, for she has got none. What dawdling sinners all these Italians are! Now then; go it ye cripples! Which will win the race? The small party, though he has a portmanteau with him, has weight in his favour still, though it is almost even betting now which will reach us first. It's awfully lucky for them that those two cocked-hatted official swells have not left for the shore yet, or by jingo they would have had their race for nothing; now there, it's neck and neck. Well, if that don't beat Banagher out of all reckoning! dub me a double-distilled Dutchman!

Do you see who the excited little cove is? Our old friend Gorles! or I'm a ring-tailed Christian." And so it was.

Like a hunted rat he had clambered up on to the deck of our steamer before the boat had scarcely touched her side; his luggage was heaved up after him. He had flung down some money to the boatmen, at which, to my surprise, they seemed for once satisfied, if not grateful, and in a most desperate hurry was evidently making for the under-deck, when he was pulled up short by one of the officers, who demanded his passport. The sudden change from almost terror to relief which his hideous little countenance exhibited was most remarkable when he turned and saw who it was who had thus seized him from behind. His papers were ready and all right. and he was allowed to escape into the depths below—for that escape was his immediate object was evident enough.

Who, then, was pursuing? I looked down over the side, and there in the other boat, now rocking below, was the grand Contessa, attempting also to come on board our vessel. But her way was barred by the other officer, who was standing relentless demanding the Signora's papers—her "*Lascia passare.*" Alas! they were not forthcoming. It was in vain that with the usual noise and wild gesticulations of

her nation she tried every sort of argument, entreaty, and persuasion. We saw her even offer gold to her stern opponent. He visibly wavered; but no, it was done too openly. He shook his head with a deeply-drawn sigh, and, as his comrade now had joined him, he ordered the lady's boatmen to leave their hold. Their own did the same, and in another minute the two boats were left behind tossing wildly in the swell caused by our revolving paddles.

No sooner were we fairly off than Gorles, emerging from his hiding-place below, ran to the stern, jumped up upon the steerage platform, and began bowing, waving his hat, and kissing his hand with the most insulting burlesque of an adieu. He likewise then and there performed a wild dance of defiance and triumph for the express edification, or rather exasperation, of his Dido, from whom, like Pious Æneas, he had thus made his escape.

You may easily imagine my disgust; my first impulse on seeing the little wretch come on board was to get out of the steamer as fast as I could. The very thought of having to sail in the same vessel almost made my heart stop short, and all my blood run the wrong way backwards through my arteries; but I called to mind how essential it was to get on as soon as possible to my poor father, not to mention

the fact of my passport being in the hands of the captain, and not to be recovered until the other end of our passage, and my luggage already at the bottom of the hold. Besides, there was no time for more than the actual thought, for we were then off and away.

But as the little brute jumped and shouted with derisive laughter, I could hardly restrain the intense desire I felt to catch him by his hind legs and pitch him overboard, either to sink to the bottom, from which he should return no more to torment me, or to be rescued and delivered again to the arms—or claws—of his contessa, which, if we might judge by what we could see of her highly-coloured countenance, as long as she remained in sight, would have been anything but an enviable fate.

"Nonsense! Now, my dear fellow," said De Lyons, walking me almost by force off to the further end of the deck, "why should you put yourself out one way or the other about him at all? Take no notice, as if you did not even know he was on board. He came up in such an awful bustle; he has not seen, or at least recognised, either you or me as yet: perhaps he wont at all. But who is the lady—do you know anything about her? She seems a deuced fine-looking woman, whoever she is."

"Why, don't you remember where you and I saw her before?" I asked, as it suddenly flashed through my mind that he and I had never met—for me to recognise him, at least—since that night in the Professor's rooms. "You surely cannot have forgotten where it was; I knew her again the instant I set eyes upon her."

Taraxacum looked, or pretended to look quite puzzled.

"Why," I went on, "that is the identical lady who was shown to us as having brought your old Dresden friend Professor Zauber to grief. One would hardly have given him credit for any such *bonne fortune* either."

"How can you know anything of the Professor's past history?" he asked, looking at me very curiously.

"How? Why I knew that much by the same way as yourself; though, perhaps, you may have learnt more particulars from him since; but I will take my oath that that is the same identical woman, now in that boat astern of us, who was brought up to appear before us by the dev—, the Party, that night the Professor introduced us—I mean you and myself—to him in his own rooms; though, by the way, how we managed to get there from yours is what I have never, often as I have thought the matter over, yet been able to fathom."

De Lyons' face assumed a strange, and quite melancholy expression, as, totally unlike himself, he spoke softly and in the most earnest tones:—"My dear Lambard, let me entreat you never to allude to that evening; I have again and again reproached myself with it, and been wretched at the thoughts of what the consequences might have been, and nearly were, to you—well, to us all—from my rashness and thoughtlessness in allowing, or rather persuading, you to submit yourself to so awful a risk. As you value your own happiness, and all you hold dear in this world, never speak of, or even allow your thoughts to dwell upon, that subject. I should never forgive myself the serious wrong that I unwittingly may have done you, or the consequences of my own folly. It has indeed been a most fearful escape, and you can have no conception what a relief to my mind, what an intense pleasure, it has been to me to meet you thus recovered and all well again. Yes; thank God, all well again."

I looked with surprise at my volatile friend; this deep-drawn sentimentality was quite a new phase in his character. He had seized my hand, and stood silent for some two or three minutes holding it tightly in his grasp. Then all of a sudden, in direct answer to my inward thoughts, for I had not uttered them, and

in just his usual voice, he cried, "Ah! by Jove, he has twigged us, and here he comes; but don't let him see that you mind him. Why condescend thus to show your antipathy; he sha'n't bother you: I'll tackle the little beggar myself."

"Holloa, Gorles! How d'ye-do, where have you dropped from? and who was that interesting female you had such a narrow escape from? Your washerwoman, I suppose: couldn't pay your bill, so had to cut for it; ay? But that was rather a dirty trick, too; for soapsuds must be dear in these parts, if one may judge from the way in which that article is economized among the natives."

Gorles's malignant eyes quite scintillated with rage at this familiar greeting. He had come across the deck swaggering towards us, through the little knots of passengers whom his extraordinary behaviour had attracted round him, with a sort of triumphant grin, and a sneer on the angle of his cocked-up nose, as if rather pleased with his own performance, and conscious of having excited a certain amount of curiosity, if not of mysterious interest, among all of those who had witnessed his escape from the unknown lady. There was a general laugh among some of our own countrymen, and others who understood English sufficiently, at De Lyons' impudent inquiry, which made the little

beggar all the more angry, and look as if almost ready to foam at the mouth.

He sputtered out something about carrying such gross impertinence too far, and that it would be well to remember that the name and fair fame of any lady of the highest rank and position in good society were not to be lightly spoken of.

"Highest rank and position," answered the incorrigible *Taraxacum*; "I am sure I beg her ladyship's pardon, but I never should have thought it; she must, I am afraid, have been desperately hard up—that is, terribly in love with you, to have chivied you in the way she did to the very ladder of the steamer. Oh, Gorles! you are a desperate Don Juan—you always were, you know."

By that equivocal compliment Gorles seemed somewhat appeased, and changing to a sort of grin, said, "You are as fond of chaff as ever, I see, De Lyons. I suppose you will never leave off—ah, and Lambard, too—*Mister* Lambard—I beg pardon." (I had enlarged the eyes of wonder on him, at his thus impudently daring to address himself to me, but he was, if at all, very slightly abashed.) "How do you do?" he went on. "Are you two travelling together? I had no idea that you and my friend De Lyons here were even acquainted."

I have a vague notion that he actually offered his hand to me, but I pretended to be very much interested in the vane, or whatever the correct nautical term may be for the little weathercock affair stuck on the top of the main-mast, so without condescending to lower my eyes down from that level, and only responding to this very pointed address with a mild grunt and an apology for a nod, I answered shortly that De Lyons and I had been thrown a great deal together at Dresden, as he knew very well, though it might not suit him now to remember it.

Then turning off, "De Lyons," I said, "I shall be reading in the saloon, if you care to join me presently."

CHAPTER XXII.

"A more sweet-spoken little gentleman, I never wish to listen to."
"*Who's your Friend*," *Old Comedy*.

It was getting on late, and nearly dinner-time, when De Lyons came to the corner sofa, on which I had been snoozing more or less through the morning over a stupid French novel.

"Why, my dear fellow," he asked, "do you stop down in this stuffy hole, while it is so beautiful and fresh up on deck? I have been smoking many pipes of peace, this last three hours, with that queer genius, Gorles. To hear that creature talk is a caution; and he is all the while so awfully plausible, too.

"He has been making his confessions; and with hardly any pumping, seemed quite ready to give me the whole chapter and verse about his lovely contessa. I am sure he went on for a full hour, at least, describing her many charms and perfections.

"By the way, you were quite right about the Professor; he did know that stunning dame, and was once deeply in love with her. For her sake he had

quarrelled with all his own belongings, thrown up some appointment they had procured for him, squandered his last shilling upon her, and then, as our friend Gorles remarks, she had very naturally and sensibly turned him over, and given him his *congé* for his pains."

"But how did you know all about that episode of the Professor's early life? I thought you had never met him, except that evening in my room; and, for my part, intimate as I was with him, I certainly never even ever heard him allude to anything of the sort."

"Why, you saw her as well as myself, that very evening," I replied, "and had exactly the same means of guessing that there must be some such story, as I had."

De Lyons put on that most exasperating puzzled look which he always chose to assume whenever I alluded to that subject. It was his regular game to pretend not to understand me; but it was no use arguing or allowing myself to be angry with him, so I let him run on as he liked.

"Gorles," he continued, "of course makes out that the lady, so treacherous to others, was desperately in love with himself; but that he by no means reciprocated the feeling to the same lengths; and though willing to avail himself of what his *bonne fortune* had thrown in his way, had been much too wary to

either ruin or commit himself, as the Professor, whom he affects to sneer at, and others have done before him.

"He tells me that his uncle, an eminent lawyer, as he describes him, though he must be some rascally pettifogging attorney, I guess, has summoned him to come home to England at once, to be married out of hand to some lovely young lady with an enormous fortune, or, at least, expectances.

"The very idea! It set me off laughing in his face, at which 'the crittur's dander rose,' and I had to pacify him.

"I was glad I succeeded, or I should have lost the amusing account of his escape and flight from his lady love, who, as we ourselves witnessed, pursued him down to Leghorn, and into the very sea.

"I remarked to him that I thought that, under the circumstances, the way in which he had publicly insulted that lady was scarcely called for, or justifiable; but he defended his unseemly conduct by alleging that he had been exasperated by her having personally assaulted him, as he slipped not from her arms exactly, but her hands, into the boat which saved him, and, besides, purely from motives of a most disinterested kindness, he had felt it right and necessary to establish for ever an irreparable gulf

between them, and thus entirely extinguish every last spark and hope of future reconciliation.

"The fortunate young heiress, to whose feet he is even now flying on the wings of love, is, he informs me, a near connexion of your own. No, my dear fellow, you need not be alarmed; it is not *Her*."—I naturally had the same thought, and asked him the question point-blank.

"No; this young lady he has never yet seen, and he does not think that you, or any of your family have either. She has only just arrived, or, may be, is yet expected, from Barbadoes or Jamaica, or some of those West Indian diggings; I am not sure he did not say New Zealand, though—but she is not a niggeress, for I ventured also to make that delicate inquiry—though, on reflection, I will not swear that it was not from the Scilly Islands or the Isle of Man from which she hailed. But I must tell you that it was on the strength of that approaching connexion, that he seemed especially to found the deep regret he expressed at your evident disinclination to fraternize with him."

"The deuce he did! I suppose he pretended not to be able to account for it."

"Well, to tell the truth, you have exactly hit it. I do assure you that that little gentleman's amiable

sentiments towards yourself, expressed as they were to me this day in the tenderest language, would have done credit to the best penny tract ever published by the Propagation Society. It would have brought the tears even to your eyes to have listened to him, as he lamented your unkind treatment of his friendly advances. He could not, he declared, suppose that old schoolboy quarrels still rankled in your mind through the years which have elapsed since you were at Eton together; and yet that since those days, he had never once met, or even heard of you, except when he happened quite accidentally to have been the means of helping you, when you had fallen among thieves at Dresden; but that when you did at last do so, although he had established a friendship with, and, as he flatters himself, been of great use and service to your respected parents, when, upon their arrival at Florence, they were but strangers in the land, you on the very first occasion, and, without the slightest apparent cause, were most pointedly and offensively rude to him."

"And you, *Taraxacum*, knowing, as you happen to do better than anyone else living, all that Gorles has done and carried on against myself and those I care for most in this world, positively could listen to, and, what is more, seem to have received for gospel, and

to have been persuaded by a rodomontade of lies out of your own memory and your own senses—you, who must remember the machinations and supernatural peril from which you yourself were the means of rescuing that poor girl—you, who yourself found me in the strange state I was on that awful night, under the influence of that little demon's will—I am only astonished at your even owning to being so easily made a fool of."

"That is just exactly it," replied De Lyons, quite imperturbably; "I am just as much astonished as yourself. I know it all, as you say, and at the time perfectly remembered all that you and I in those days have again and again talked over; but, in spite of all that—in spite of myself, bless your heart!—he somehow talked me round, and I engage to say he would talk you also, or anybody else off their hind legs in no time, so that they shall feel entirely for him, and with him, just as I own that I do at this moment, though all the while knowing what a subtle little rascal it is."

"Do you, then, mean to say that you did not, when he was pretending to wonder at, and regret my antipathy to him, allude to, or remind him of, the decided part that you yourself had taken in thwarting the very climax of his Dresden atrocities?"

"Of course I did, trust me for that, and for a minute or so I really fancied that he seemed somewhat taken aback. But there, he explained it all away, upon my word I can now hardly tell you how, but somehow so plausibly and almost satisfactorily that I felt quite convinced, while he was talking to me at least, that we must have taken a wrong view of those matters. But, whether or no, it is, you must acknowledge, perfectly true that you and he never did actually meet—no, not even once personally—during all that time. He has that in his favour when he denies having given you just cause for offence. He has no reason to know, or, at any rate, every reason to pretend ignorance, of your connexion, or any special right to interfere with what he alleges to have been his fair and honourable attentions to Miss De Lorme, at Dresden."

"Don't speak of her," I cried, "for Heaven's sake; pray don't pollute her name, by raking up those abominable memories, or I shall fall upon, and throttle you in another minute. I tell you I cannot bear it—and as to Gorles and I never having met, why do you insist upon pretending to forget the strange interview which you yourself witnessed, and took part in, in the Professor's rooms? Now, don't shake your head and put on that cursed look of misapprehension which I

have noticed on your face whenever I allude to that evening's adventure. For some motive or feeling of cowardice, on your own account you may try to banish it entirely from your own mind, but that will not make me forget, and risk or no risk, you will not persuade me ever to discredit the evidence of my own senses."

I spoke, as I felt, very bitterly and fiercely; but quickly recovering myself, I added, in a more gentle tone, "Confound the fellow, I wish he had never come near this steamer; see how his infernal influence is already over me again, stirring me up thus to quarrel with you, whom only this morning I was so delighted at our meeting. But there, surely the vessel is large enough for Gorles and myself to keep out of one another's way for the next twenty-four hours, or whatever time it may take to reach Marseilles." I turned over to my stupid book again, as a strong hint to De Lyons that I did not care to argue the matter further

But he would not leave me alone; whether as I at one time half suspected, urged by his love of mischief, and in hopes of a scene, or whether having taken the idea into his obstinate head, or from natural good nature, he was so bent on making us friends.

"Well, what am I to say to him?" he persisted; "he is so very anxious, you see; and if you could only get

over your prejudice; it is always more jolly to be on speaking terms, at least, if not bosom friends with every one. See how he is watching us now. Do, like a good fellow, let me beckon him here to join us."

"I can only wonder," I remarked, "that after the treatment he complains of, he should wish to be on any other terms with me but those of perfect estrangement."

"That is the very thing I said to him myself," rejoined *Taraxacum;* "and he even owned that it was rather strange and unaccountable, but that in spite of himself, in spite of your repulsive manner, that he was never near you, without being conscious of a strong and irresistible attraction towards you. He declared plainly, that he would rather gain you as a friend and constant companion, than any other individual he had ever known; that something told him that it was to be his destiny, if he could be happy enough once to establish a reconciliation and reciprocity of feeling with you, to serve you, to fight for you, and that he could imagine no happier end than to even die in some mortal struggle for your sake."

"Fiddle-de-dee," I cried, scornfully; "I wonder what next indeed; though if he were not such a thundering liar, as I believe him to be, and such an attraction really did exist in his composition, it might

be accounted for by the natural working of that portion of my cerebral organization of which he became dishonestly possessed, in *rapport* with its own original root, which still remains with me. You remember, perhaps, the Professor's theory on that point, at any rate."

"Perhaps so," answered De Lyons, with a long peculiar whistle; "that idea never struck me; though, by Jove, now you mention it, I think you may be right. But in that case, why not cultivate him? It may be really to your own advantage; anyhow, if I do bring Gorles up to you, you will not go and knock a fellow on the head who entertains such friendly sentiments towards yourself, or try to pitch the temporary possessor of part of your own mental powers overboard, or any games of that sort, will you?"

"God forbid!" I answered, with a shudder. "You know full as well as I do, De Lyons, what would be the consequences to myself were I even to lay a finger upon him—though to serve the evil ends of himself and his special patron I dare say he will try his best to make me do so. Well there, as you insist upon it, if your dearly-beloved friend, as he seems to have become, chooses to come this way, and speak to me, I will answer him, and do my best to keep my tongue within the bounds of bare politeness; but pray don't

bring him up with any special explanation, or palaver of reconciliation."

Thus the pertinacious fellow carried his point, and invited Gorles to come and sit down next on the other side of himself at dinner, so that afterwards, while drinking our coffee upon deck, we found ourselves thrown, as it were, naturally together. Towards myself the little wretch lost no opportunity of being civil enough—indeed, obtrusively so—for more than once he pointedly appealed to me for an opinion in some of his arguments with De Lyons; but he only got very short answers out of me, for I was not paying much attention to either of them, as the two sat jabbering there, discussing all manner of subjects. One remark, however, of Master Gorles I did think worth noting as peculiarly characteristic. De Lyons had mentioned the name of some man he had met somewhere, asking Gorles whether he happened to know him?

No. He never had heard of him; why?

"Oh; I was only calling to mind rather a queer trick he was said to have played about some money which he won from a poor young fellow who was more than half an idiot; but as you don't know any of the parties concerned, of course the story can have no interest to you."

"I don't see that," cried Gorles, quite eagerly, and pulling a great note-book out of his pocket. "I never miss the chance of getting a story against anyone, whether I know him or not; one may perhaps meet with him hereafter, you see, and then who knows but what that story may turn up useful some day or the other."

De Lyons and I merely exchanged one glance of our eyes, and Gorles saw that glance distinctly; but so far from appearing to be at least disconcerted by the disgust therein conveyed, he positively stuck up the nose of pride, and his face wrinkled into a smile, or rather grin, of self-satisfaction, as if he had uttered a sentiment of which he had every reason to be proud. I also did really almost feel a spurious admiration for such audacious effrontery.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A COLD RECEPTION, BUT A WARM FAREWELL.

It was quite dark by the time we steamed into the harbour at Genoa, so that we could scarcely distinguish the crowd of clumsy shore boats which almost before our anchor had run out were swarming round both sides of the vessel, clashing against one another, while their owners clamoured and fought among themselves for the possession of those passengers whose voyage was come to an end; or for those who, like De Lyons and myself, though bound for Marseilles, had taken the precaution to have our passports viséd, so as to allow us to go on shore to that proud City of Palaces, whose thousands of lights, rising in tier above tier like a vast amphitheatre around us, were brilliantly reflected in the dark water below.

Three hours only the steamer was to remain in port, as we were emphatically warned by the chief mate, as he examined and handed the passes to each individual as he descended the side ladder. Gorles,

who had expressed his gracious intention of accompanying us, had omitted to have his papers thus made out *en règle*. A terrible altercation ensued, in which his antagonist, whether rightfully or not I cannot say, for there was much confusion, and the light of the solitary lantern was none of the strongest, accused Gorles of spitting at him.

Taraxacum and I had taken our places, with some half-dozen others, in one of the boats below, rejoicing thus to have got rid of him. But our joy was premature. Just as we shoved off, and were almost perhaps a yard or thereabouts clear of the ship's side, something came bundling down the steps, and sprang after us. It was Gorles, who had taken advantage of his small size to slip between the legs of his opponent, and so escaped.

Though he managed to jump just hard enough to come with his knees and shins upon the sharp edge of our boat's stern, he must have tumbled backwards into the depths below if I had not instinctively made a clutch at him, and there contrived to hold him fast by one arm for what seemed like two or three minutes. I cannot exactly say how long it might have been that I held him thus poised between wind and water; but I had time distinctly to recognise and repel the temptation which rose strongly within me, to leave my hold

and let him drop, and so rid myself of him for ever.

But second and better thoughts instantly succeeded, and I lugged him in with such a hearty swing that he fell floundering in amongst all our legs in the bottom of the boat, from whence he had hardly recovered himself by the time we had arrived alongside the landing-place.

I should have reproached and loathed myself for the rest of my days if I had yielded to the horrible temptation of that momentary thought. Yet I was not the less irritated and vexed with myself for having missed such a chance; particularly when, having at last struggled on to his legs again, Gorles began to overwhelm me with thanks and protestations, which bored me exceedingly, so that I could not resist letting fling at him:

"I thought it was a great Newfoundland dog, who knew no better, jumping after us, or I shouldn't have stretched a finger out to help you, I promise you. It would have served you quite right if you had tumbled in head over ears, only we should have had to pull you all damp and slimy in amongst us. You must have caught your shin-bones a tolerable crack, which I hope you relished."

Having no luggage with us, we were allowed to

pass easily through the custom-house gates, Gorles having his lie ready, to the effect that his name was included in the passport of one of us other Ingleses. He was intent upon doing the honours of the place to us, for it seemed that he had been there before, and was for taking De Lyons and myself to some grand café, on the splendours and attractions of which he largely dilated.

I managed, however, to give them the slip, and putting myself at once in the hands of one of those polyglot touters who are always hanging about the quays and landing-places in search of prey, started off directly for the Strada Cattarina, in which I had ascertained that the De Lormes were living. I had offered to bring a letter, or any message from my aunt, announcing my intention of landing, and paying the Colonel a passing visit, as I knew I should have the opportunity of doing.

But she had thrown cold water upon the idea, alleging that it was very doubtful whether the steamer would call in at Genoa at all, and if so, certainly not for anything like sufficient time to allow of any one landing. I saw what the old lady was at, so did not take the trouble to ask her even for the address, but made our courier find it out for me in casual conversation with Harrison.

We went straight up a very steep ascent, by narrow alleys and passages, dark and odoriferous, not the least according to my preconceived notions of the grand streets, lined by magnificent marble palaces, triumphs of engineering and architecture, as described in all the guide and hand books. But I had not much time to indulge in reflections of disappointed taste, for we very soon arrived at the house, or I suppose I must call it "palazzo," of which I was in search, and having been admitted by the porter, and mounting a splendid old white marble staircase wide enough for any two full-sized wagons to pass on, found ourselves at the door of Colonel De Lorme's apartments.

I had almost hoped to have dropped in upon them unannounced and unexpected, as a pleasant surprise, but that was not to be. Twice I had to ring the loud-sounding bell before the servant answered the summons, who having looked me well over by the light of a lamp which he had brought with him, rather suspiciously desired to know my business with the Colonello at that hour. At first he declared that he was engaged, then that he was asleep, which I had no doubt was true, and appealed from me, who did not understand him at the pace he went on chattering, to my attendant *commissionaire* to know

whether I could not come again in the morning. As he utterly refused to let me in without sending in my name, losing all patience I gave him a card, and desired him in my best Italian *prendere* that in to his padrone, and to *guardar acuto*, that is, "look sharp about it." He took the precaution of shutting us carefully outside, but through a grating which he left open in the door, we could watch him and his lamp shuffling unsteadily along like a will-of-the-wisp, now on one side, now the other, of the whole length of a very long corridor or passage, round a corner at the end of which we could hear him open and close a door, and then all was silence and complete darkness. After a few minutes the door, which we could hear, but not see, opened again; there was a light step, and a whisk of petticoats. 'Gad! how my heart beat at that sound! and then the door round the corner again sounded, and the will-of-the-wisp came flickering back towards us. I was admitted, and conducted to the presence of the colonel. He was alone when I entered, but there was another chair on the opposite side of the low reading-lamp, on the soft cushion of which I could feel a gentle warmth, as having greeted my uncle, I sat down in it. At the corner of the table lay a book, with a fresh sprig of jessamine placed as a mark between its still

open pages. I have that sprig of jessamine now in my possession.

My uncle had evidently been just roused from his evening snooze, from which he had scarcely collected himself sufficiently to bid me an ordinary welcome. He seemed embarrassed, and not to know what exactly to make of my unexpected visit.

I, of course, gave him the last news of my aunt, and announced her intended return, accompanied by my mother, from Florence.

"Oh! ah! very well; very much delighted, of course, to see you again, my dear boy; but ought not you to be pushing on, so as to reach your poor father, laid up there as he is all alone, as soon as possible? I suppose you wont be staying here at Genoa more than just to rest for the night."

I informed him that no efforts or pushing forward on my part could possibly put me faster on my way than by going on as I intended by the Messagerie boat, which had brought me, and would be starting again for Marseilles in about three hours."

"Oh, to be sure—oh! in three hours she leaves, does she?—very often gets clear and starts before the time they announce."

Then ensued a long and awkward pause. After a bit, I screwed up courage to ask my uncle if he was all alone.

"Alone? yes to be sure I am. Your aunt, as you know, started off at a moment's notice, and left me here by myself. I dine down at the restaurant: very sorry to have nothing to offer you: there is nothing in the house but a case of sardines, and that was finished last night."

"Thank you, uncle, very much; but I dined before I came ashore capitally. How is Ferdy—have you heard from him lately from Dresden?"

"Ferdy is not at Dresden. We have nothing at all to do with Dresden now; wish we never had. Ferdy is gone to school in England. Idle young dog—never writes. When he does no one can read his scrawl. Now his mother is away, I shall make neither head nor tail of the boy's letters."

"Well, but you have Katie with you," I said, with a catch in my throat. "I hope that she is by this time quite well and strong again. Am I not to have the pleasure of seeing her this evening?" I added, growing desperate.

"Seeing Katie? Miss De Lorme?—no; she is gone to bed, still very weak and ailing—cannot stand the least excitement—you must excuse her. The fact is, that we are obliged to treat her still quite as an invalid."

Then the old gentleman yawned profoundly, pull-

ing out his watch three times, at least, within five minutes, and then remarked, "It has been a great pleasure, of course, my dear Frank, to have caught this glimpse of you; very kind of you to have called and brought me tidings of your aunt, hurried and anxious to get on as you, of course, are. I don't wish to be inhospitable, but it takes a very long time to get down to the waterside from hence, and it would never do, you know, to miss your steamer. What! are you going? Well, you are right not to run it too close. Good-by, then, my dear boy—God bless you. Let us hope that you will find your father not so bad, after all, as we have feared. Mind you write, and give us full particulars. Good-by."

I shook his hand without another word. As I looked him straight in the face, I fancied I saw a shade of, perhaps, shame, perhaps remorse, as though, in spite of himself, he could not entirely forget that it was through my means that his darling child, whom he had but then refused to let me see, had been restored to him, and, in fact, saved from the grave, or even worse. I could not trust myself to speak, but slamming the door of the room violently after me, found myself in profound darkness. Luckily, in his agitation, the old fellow had omitted to ring or call to the servant for a light.

I was groping my way along by the wall, when a door softly opened; I felt a touch, and a soft voice whispered my name. I can hardly realize the thought, even now, as I look back, that it was indeed really her; that I actually held her tightly pressed against my own breast. As I felt her arms folded round my own neck, I could feel the darling child's little heart throbbing; and my cheek was wet with the moisture of her tears.

"Oh, Frank!" she whispered, with a suppressed sob, which I was half afraid would break out, and betray us, "Oh, Frank! is it indeed yourself, come back to me at last? I have felt sure the last three days that you were coming, but all to-day I have had a strange and nervous feeling that it might not be you, Frank, after all, but as if that dreadful Mr. Gorles was again coming within range of me."

"Hush, darling Katie," I said, "you must not give way to such fears and fancies; he shall never come near to harm you again." Heaven forgive me! The poor girl hardly suspected how truly her natural instincts of terror served her; but there was no use in my telling her, you know.

"But why," I asked, "did you run away out of the room when I was coming?"

"Papa did not let me see your card; but when he

had looked at the name himself, said it was a stranger coming to see him on business, and that I had better go to my own room; but I knew the sound of your step, and I heard your voice as you spoke to the servant at the door. It is much too bad. Papa, though he is always very, very kind and gentle, is not true, I should say, fair, to me. Hush! who is that? There is some one at the end of the passage. Good-by—God bless and keep you, dearest Frank." Another close pressure, another last——well never mind, and she was gone.

What would I have given for only one minute's sight of her bonny face, one deep look into her large brown eyes, before I thus lost her, as I felt, for ever? But it was so pitch dark, that when she had left me, I was not at all sure in which direction the outer door lay.

A shuffling of feet, and a sort of sound between a yawn and a sniffle convinced me that there was some person there sure enough, though I had imputed any such presence entirely to poor Katie's excited imagination.

"Who's that?" I asked, very softly, in the vernacular.

"C'est moi, signore, his excellenza's commissionnaire, whom monsieur desired ici restare."

Of course,—it was my polyglot conductor, whom

the servant had left to sit in a niche by the door, not even vouchsafing him the lamp for a companion.

I think he had sensibly passed that dreary time in gentle slumbers, or, at any rate, did not seem to have overheard, and certainly could not have seen anything of our hasty—I was going to say interview, but that is, sticking to exact truth as I wish to do, exactly what it wasn't.

If our whispers or any other gentle sounds had reached him, I can only say that the fellow's countenance, into which I stared most searchingly under the full glare of a street lamp as I tipped him for his services, did not in the least betray him.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"I had a dream, which was not all a dream."—Byron.

Notwithstanding my worthy uncle's solicitude on the subject, I was back on board the steamer a full hour and more before I need have been, and long before any of the other passengers had returned.

When De Lyons and his friend Gorles did at last arrive, only just before we started, with two or three other kindred spirits, with whom they had fraternized from among our fellow passengers—a brace of Yankees, and a young fellow, who vaunted himself greatly as being traveller for some dry goods firm in the City—I suppose *Taraxacum* now felt that he had a right to be "Hail, fellow! well met" with any gent in that line of life.

This lively lot had been, by their own account, enjoying "no end of a lark" ashore—*i.e.*, as far as I could make out, making considerable snobs of themselves. A heavy supper at the Café de la Concorde, a row in the public billiard-rooms belonging to that

establishment, and a fight between Gorles and the head *garçon,* seemed to have composed the principal features of their evening's adventures.

Gorles had brought back with him four bottles of Astì wine, and a huge box of preserved fruits and confections, almost the size of a moderate oyster-barrel, as a special thank-offering to myself, for having, as he declared, so nobly saved his precious life.

I wasn't going to accept the sticky nastiness, nor anything else from him. I told him plainly that I desired neither his thanks nor his presents; and as soon as we had steamed clear out of the harbour, and lost sight of the lights of Genoa, I turned into my berth in the small cabin which had been allotted to myself and De Lyons conjointly.

I had been asleep for some time—fast asleep and dreaming. I dreamt that I was in a great ship—which was just the real fact, you know—and that we were tossed in a most tremendous tempest—which was anything but the fact, for it was as calm as possible, and we were going along full steam as steadily as possible; but in my dream we couldn't make way at all, the more we steamed and crowded on sail, the more we only floated backwards stern first, and we rolled and pitched over and over in the most fearful manner; then all the passengers and all the ship's crew

gathered together for a consultation on the deck, the result of which was, that the mate who took the passports, went round to us all, and asked if there was any gentleman answering to the name of Jonah on board, for, if there were, that it had been decided that he must be chucked overboard to the whales, who were hanging about all round the steamer in immense numbers, bellowing impatiently for their expected prey; then it all of a sudden struck me that it must be Gorles who was the cause of our danger and detention, the special object of Divine wrath and vengeance; and I felt it to be my duty publicly to denounce him as such.

All agreed unanimously to my view, and there was a general rush to catch and cast him overboard into the boiling waters, all among the whales, without a moment's further delay; but he ran to me, and clinging round my knees, piteously entreated me to save him. He tried to bribe me with the promises of whole cart-loads full of dried fruits and sweetmeats, an hundreds of bottles of Astì wine; but I kicked him away ruthlessly, and told him that he must certainly die for his sins, and that I was glad to see him thus paid out, for Katie's sake. "Katie De Lorme shall be thus avenged: yes, Katie's sake!" I shouted at the top of my voice. "Ah, you vile little toad, you

never guessed that I was with Katie herself this very evening at Genoa, and I promised that you should never harm her again."

This last sentence still ran out its length upon my tongue after I was awake, having sprung up in the excitement of my dream, and knocked my head a most thundering crack against the top of my berth.

"The deuce you did!" uttered with a low chuckle, was the sound which struck my astonished ears before I had scarcely had time to recover the crack, or could realize where I was.

"The deuce you did! that's what you were after, when you gave us the slip this evening."

There was no light, but I knew the voice in a minute. I rolled myself out of my berth, stepping with my big toe right into *Taraxacum's* wide open mouth as he lay snoring below me. He woke up cursing horribly, and laid hold of me tight by the leg, but I made a grab at the little rascal, for it was Gorles himself sure enough, just as he was slipping through the door, and pinned him tight.

"What are you doing in here?" I asked.

"What's the row?" grumbled De Lyons, still only half awake. "What tricks have you been playing? You shouldn't shove things into a fellow's mouth; you might choke him, you know."

Gorles couldn't escape, so he determined to take the bull by the horns, and make the best of it.

"Why," he said, "I heard some one shouting and holloaing so loud through the partition that I thought I had better come to see what was the matter, and therefore I peeped into this door softly; you were talking away all manner of wild nonsense, so I thought the best way was to answer you as nearly as I could, which I have always been told is the right thing to pacify people, and soothe them down quietly."

"Confound him," said De Lyons. "Who is it? What is he after? Has he been rifling the pockets of our clothes, or come after our watches? Call the steward, and make him lock the thief up somewhere till morning, or just thump his head hard against the door-post, that we may have a mark to swear to when the light comes."

I was within an ace of acting upon this advice, when I luckily remembered the consequences, which, in the confusion of the moment, had almost escaped my mind, and, relaxing my hold, he scuttled off just like a rat into his own hole, which was in the next cabin to our own. I took uncommon good care to lock ourselves in for the rest of the night.

Next morning, that aggravating fellow De Lyons,

having first carefully counted over his money, his studs, watch-chain gimcracks in which he rejoiced, and other valuables, which, as I could not help remarking, betrayed his real opinion of the friend whose cause he chose so stoutly to advocate, positively began to take his part, and declared that, for the life of him, he could see nothing particularly strange, or unaccountable in Gorles having thus mysteriously turned up in our cabin, as it was only quite natural, on hearing a great row and shouting, that he should come in to ascertain—if it were from no higher motive than common curiosity—which of us two was murdering the other. And thus backed up, the little brute had the audacity to come up to me after breakfast to explain, and to laugh off, what he was pleased to call our "rather funny" night's adventure, as a good joke. At the same time, offering to give me his honour—and you should just have seen the diabolical grin with which he alluded to that precious stake—that though he heard me calling out and talking, that it was all so incoherent and unconnected that he had not the slightest idea what it was all about, and that I had betrayed no secrets or confidences.

I could only long impatiently for our arrival at Marseilles, when I hoped to escape and be free from

his hateful presence, which oppressed me; and to make the time pass quicker, and to keep out of his way, I buried myself in my stupid French novel; it was one that I had snatched up haphazard from my mother's table just as I was starting — starchly proper, of course, and dreadfully sentimental. Why is it, I wonder, that all French novels, unless they are very improper or very immoral, should always be so abominably stupid?

CHAPTER XXV.

"Summâ diligentiâ per Galliam viam prosecutus."—Cæs. *Com.*

"Why am I to be persecuted by Gorles on the top of a diligence?"
Printer's Devil.

Arrived at Marseilles, De Lyons and I had lost no time in landing, and getting ourselves and our traps cleared through the then unavoidable nuisances of those social purgatories, the passport offices and the Douane.

We had left Gorles behind us, again engaged in a hot contest, this time with the steward, to whom he refused to pay the usual fee, upon the plea that although he had engaged a berth, he had not taken anything like two francs' worth of sleep out of it. He declared that he had not, indeed, slept a wink. He did not say why, but I believe that he had been prowling about the steamer all night, like a cat, from cabin to cabin.

We went at once to the diligence-office to secure places. The Great Southern Railway of France was not at that time completed below Châlons, except for a few leagues just out of Marseilles. There was only

one diligence which started for Paris that afternoon, taking the rail as far as it went, and then going on through the night and next day as far as Lyons. Every place in the *coupé intérieur* and the *rotonde* was engaged, but the three places in the *banquette* on the top, were to be had.

"By all means let us take them all three," I said directly, and paid down the money.

"Gorles will gladly take the odd one off our hands," said De Lyons. "I know he intends to come on at once without stopping."

"Does he?" I replied, "that is unlucky; for with the very stout *conducteur*, who will occupy more than twice his proper space, there will not be a bit more room than we two shall require to be comfortable, with only just space for our rugs and coats and paraphernalia between us."

"Don't let us tell Gorles," said the perfidious *Taraxacum*, delighted at the idea. "I dare say he will never think of coming after a place until it is time to start, and it will be such a jolly sell for him."

"I think we have dodged our worthy friend now," I remarked, as we went on our way much rejoicing and contented in spirit; and refreshed, as I was, before long, corporeally, by a warm bath and a capital feed at the Hôtel des Empereurs, I was even more

effectually renovated mentally, by the thoughts of so soon leaving my *bête noire*, and his evil influences with a twelve hours' start at least, behind me.

He came in while we were still at our repast. We could not help his joining us there, because we were all at one public table in the *salle à manger*.

De Lyons by this time owned that he was an odious little beast, and that he had had enough of his company; but he sat himself down by us, and joined in our conversation. We did not, however, much mind him, consoling ourselves, as we were, with the thought of how soon we should be rid of his unwelcome company altogether.

Not a word did we volunteer about the diligence, but *Taraxacum* dug his elbow so smartly into my ribs that I nearly yelled out, when the obsequious *maître d'hôtel* came in kindly to suggest that if any of *les messieurs Anglais* intended departing for Paris, it would be well to see about securing their places without delay.

Gorles started off at once, and we chuckled unrestrainedly to think of the disappointment in store for him.

He did not return; and by-and-by it was time for us to be off, and down we went in high glee to the diligence-office.

We had tossed for the corner seat, and I had won it; De Lyons, therefore, had to crawl up first, and had reached the lofty height, when he uttered a loud exclamation of astonishment. I was up in less than a moment behind him. I nearly fell back again on to the pavement below; there, snugly ensconced in the further corner of the *banquette*, reposed Gorles, grinning at us, and slowly wagging his head in solemn derision.

We were beaten, there was no mistake about it, though we loudly protested, and showing our tickets, proved that although only two persons, we had paid for, and were entitled to all three places for ourselves. That cunning imp had bargained with and paid the *conducteur* for his own special place, who, as he explained the arrangement, shrugged his shoulders over his ears, and declaimed against the selfishness and *exigence* of all English, declaring that we were only too fortunate in having *un gentil petit monsieur comme celui-là*, to share the space with us instead of himself, who was *gros*, and would have taken up double the room.

We were forced to submit; but so far revenged ourselves upon the *conducteur*, who once or twice in the course of that bitter night attempted to come in himself: that we stoutly resisted, he had sold his right,

and in vain appealed to our compassion; so the wretched man had to stay out in the cold, either balancing himself on a moiety of the very small perch in front, alongside of the driver, or clinging on by stray straps to the steps or lamp-irons of the vehicle as best he could.

Gorles himself resisted all such attempts even more strenuously than ourselves, flying at him like a very fiend incarnate; as, indeed, during that awful journey he did at every individual he came near.

Awful indeed, and ever memorable that journey certainly was! I verily believe that if I were to live to be a hundred, the impressions that were vividly stamped upon my mind during those three days on the road between Marseilles and Paris will never be effaced. Though now some years have passed, and I have been to so many places, and done so many things which I have entirely forgotten, every scene, every little incident of that journey is as fresh in my memory, as if it had all happened yesterday.

The continual rows we had to go through, the perpetual squabbles, the evil blood that was stirred up by that vindictive little monster through the whole course of our route, and the way he involved us, against our wills, and yet without being able to help ourselves, in his quarrels, until matters were brought

to the tremendous climax which I shall have to tell you directly, were really what I never could have even imagined or believed, unless I had myself witnessed and suffered them.

Not that he attempted to quarrel with us; on the contrary, the more I snubbed Gorles, and plainly expressed my opinion as to his outrageous conduct, and the disgrace which he brought not only on himself but upon us, his most unwilling companions—De Lyons even resorting to downright threats of thrashing him, unless he would shut up and behave himself more like a gentleman,—but all the more savage we became with him, the more obsequious and exaggerated were his reiterated protestations of attachment and gratitude towards us both, but myself particularly.

It was more often than not, by way of being on our behalf, that he deemed it necessary to fly at, fight with, and in the coarsest terms abuse every person he came across.

De Lyons declared that he really thought it must be the effect of my wrath and indignation acting on his brain, through the sympathy of the perverted supply of animal pluck which he had so long ago purloined from myself. For my part, I did not see but that there might be more truth than he per-

haps intended in the surmise, for I had the words of the old Professor in my mind, when he foreboded of Gorles, that he might probably become the victim of pugnacious impulses which would prove disproportioned to his size ; and if he was only obeying the impulses which he had described to *Taraxacum,* for "serving, fighting for, and even falling in my defence," I in return felt conscious of a rather ungrateful desire for seeing him fairly smashed, like a venomous little wasp as he was.

To begin with, then. We were settled in our places, and on the point of starting from Marseilles, when row number one came off with a poor fruit-seller in the street.

I had myself selected and paid—half-a-franc, I think it was—for a pomegranate. "Bother the thing!" I said, as I tasted it, "it is not ripe." I had hardly made the remark when Gorles snatched the fruit from my very mouth, wriggled his little legs out without undoing the apron, which was by that time settled and strapped across us, jumped down almost upon the very head of the astonished fruit-seller, upsetting his pomegranates, regardless of which he loudly demanded another in exchange, and even two for the price which had been paid, and which, entirely upon his own authority, he declared to be ex-

orbitant. The poor man naturally resisted, the crowd took his part, and we should have probably run a chance of being pulled down amongst them, as deserving victims of public indignation, if the postilion had not at that moment luckily cracked his whip, and started his horses with a shout, while Gorles had to scramble up again as best he could.

De Lyons, by the way, had taken the advantage of slipping into his corner place, which nothing would induce him to give up again.

But thus it was that we set out on that inauspicious journey, among the execrations of the populace. Only a fitting prelude, as it proved, was that start to what we were to undergo. At each town we stopped at to change horses did Gorles somehow contrive to get up a quarrel; fighting with every post-master on the road, against all of whom he invariably swore to lodge detrimental complaints before the authorities, for the inferiority of their horses, the harness, the roads, or some fault or another.

It was the same with every single one among the other passengers in the diligence itself, all of whom, as far as we could make out, he had gratuitously insulted before we had arrived, by making faces at, and even offensive observations upon them, in at the windows of the several compartments of the vehicle.

One old French gentleman in the *coupé* he had rendered perfectly furious by crushing in the top of his hat as he was swinging himself down from above, just as the old gentleman had put his head out of the side window to make an observation; and grinning with all his might, had offered him, instead of an apology, a sticky sweetmeat, and then a halfpenny cigarette, by way of compensation for his awkwardness.

So with every fresh postilion in succession, the rows and personal abuse that ensued, and in which we, of course, came in for our share, were something too awful to sit by and listen to.

The larger the man—and it has already been justly remarked by one of the very first among English authors, that among the French the smallest men appear to be always selected for soldiers, as the largest are, or rather were, by an equally invariable rule, taken for the postilions—the more gigantic the postilion, the more virulently did Gorles always seem impelled to attack, insult, and abuse him in proportion. "If the scoundrel had said another single word" he told us on more than one occasion, "I would have jumped down and pitched into him."

"Do," said De Lyons; "I dare say he wouldn't dare really to 'stick up' to you; you can skilfully catch

him a crack in the eye, you know, or double the fellow up when he leans down, as of course he must to reach you."

But though thus exhorted, as we hoped, to go in for his own inevitable annihilation, he never seemed inclined to actually carry his oft-repeated threats into execution, but contented himself with a more strategic species of revenge; for I perceived him, when he fancied that De Lyons and myself were both asleep in the middle of the night, quietly opening the little window pane of the glass front, and maliciously injuring his adversary on the driving perch in front by cutting sundry slits with his penknife in the skirts of the poor fellow's coat behind, and then pouring the remnants of his wine-bottle, and putting cigar-ends and other filth, into his pockets. Still, all the while, as I have said, his attentions to myself were even more odious than his enmity against all the rest of the world.

He had stowed away his box of sweetmeats somewhere under our legs, and at intervals during the night he would insist upon producing them.

"Would I condescend to accept one, only one? They were so excellent he was sure I should like them. Would I, to oblige him, only just try one small one?"

"If you offer them to me again," I said at last, utterly losing all patience, "I will pitch the whole lot of them out into the road."

De Lyons also entirely refused them, alleging that it made him quite sick even to look at such things, "on a journey, too, of all occasions to think of," as he added contemptuously: but when Gorles was asleep, I heard Master *Taraxacum* picking away and munching at them the whole night through.

The beastly things somehow got shaken out all over the place in the course of the night. I found myself sitting upon a great sticky preserved apricot; and when we at last arrived at that journey's end, two large pieces of candied orange-peel had insinuated themselves into my very boots, as I found when I came to draw them off.

Though all through the night I was constantly waking from uneasy snatches of sleep, feverish, and parched with thirst, and was glad to get a draught of water, or anything to drink at the post-houses when we stopped to change, I would rather have choked, than accept any of his Astì wine, which he would insist upon offering me, only to be disdainfully refused—I would have none of it. It was only by mere snatches during that weary night that I managed to get any sleep at all. Once I woke up to

find Gorles's heels actually resting upon my shoulder, while his head was comfortably pillowed in De Lyons' lap, as he had stretched himself lengthways in the space between us. Another time, having wriggled and curled himself up like a hedgehog, you may guess my indignation when I found my hat, which had slipped from the strap above us, squashed out of all recognizable form completely under him.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A FRENCH FIRE-BRAND.

It was between ten and eleven o'clock on the second evening that we arrived, at last, lumbering into Lyons; and all turned out, or rather in, for supper.

There Gorles thought fit to crown all his iniquities, and to bring shame upon us and our country, by deliberately sitting down in the public *salle-à-manger*, pulling off his boots, and then his stockings, which latter he proceeded to hang upon the fender bars to warm, while he positively came, and sat down barefooted at the table, to join ourselves and the rest of the diligence passengers at supper.

Two French ladies, who were evidently of a certain position in good society, showed their unmistakeable disgust, by at once rising and leaving the room.

Their companion, the elderly French gentleman, whom Gorles had already insulted, also rose, and calling in the *maitre d'hotel*, sternly insisted that all of us three Englishmen should be at once compelled to quit the table.

It was in vain that De Lyons and I attempted to explain, and to repudiate all connexion with our disgraceful little brute of a fellow-countryman.

The whole company were against us, and declared that we were three travelling companions and friends, all equally implicated in the continual squabbles, which had been going on the whole way up, and now equally responsible for the last indecent outrage to their feelings as a body.

We did remonstrate with Gorles in no very measured terms; but he, more than three-parts screwed by his repeated potations of Astì wine, which he had been tippling at during the whole journey, besides sundry reinforcements of cognac at the places where we had stopped for our breakfast and dinner, sat stolidly defiant.

At last, he declared that, to oblige us, he would put on his stockings, and try to behave himself more decently; but that he would see the whole lot of beastly foreigners "blowed" for all that he cared, as to what they might think, or say of him.

But just as he had uttered this sentiment, four or five of the company gathering round together, suddenly laid hands upon him, and in spite of his kicking, scratching, and even biting, like a cat in a trap, he was in no time fairly bundled out of the room, and

his filthy stockings and boots, taken up with the tongs, flung out after him.

They then requested us to follow him, but as we stood up together prepared for an assault, they seemed to think better of it; but resorted to the meaner expedient of requesting the *maitre d'hotel* not to allow us to be served with supper or any other refreshment, although we might insist upon keeping our places at the table.

I was already angry and sore enough in my temper without this additional bother and aggravation; but I tried hard to keep some command over myself, as I again in the plainest and most explicit terms asserted that we had nothing to do with, nor were in the least degree responsible for, the conduct of the disgusting little wretch.

That though we begged entirely to repudiate all connexion with him, yet, as Englishmen, we had no hesitation in owning that we were ashamed, and would even go so far as to offer an apology and expression of regret to the present company, that they should have been thus annoyed and insulted, by any one calling himself our countryman; though as individuals, we could not allow ourselves to be implicated in the disgrace.

De Lyons, by the way, I fancy as a clencher to the

truthfulness of this protest, added: "Can anybody suppose that if we had really been the fellow's friends, that we should have stood by so quietly to see you, messieurs, shove him out of the room as you did (and serve him right, too)? Why, double the whole lot of you together would not have been able to do it. The very fact of our not standing by him ought, and must be proof enough that we certainly did not consider that we had anything more to do with him than yourselves."

To this, I must own, rather unnecessarily defiant speech, the old gentleman, who though he had not been amongst those who were personally concerned in expelling Gorles, had all along taken the most vehement part against us, responded with a shrug, and in a tone of the most ineffable contempt:

"*Au contraire*, messieurs, the forbearance of which you vaunt yourselves would seem to prove rather that you are not only liars, but poltroons and blustering cowards also, as all you Englishmen really are."

This was too much. I snatched up a heavy plate which lay near me to fling across the table at his head; —but he was old and unwieldy, and I had just presence of mind enough to stay my hand in time.

Every man round the table sprung up in general confusion.

"Monsieur," I said, with as much calmness as I could assume, "your advanced years and grey hairs give you the advantage of being able to offer gross insults, which a younger man would not dare to venture upon."

"Ha! ha!" he laughed, tauntingly. "What would you? I know the real worth of your courage, and that of all your countrymen, better than you perhaps imagine. All Englishmen, though like yourself loud in threats, will excuse themselves from fighting, because when the moment of danger arrives they remember that it is 'unchristian' to do so. Let us prove your big words: for example, my nephew, the captain here, will, I am sure, on my part as well as his own, repeat my opinion of you, and stand fully answerable for any consequences."

Among the passengers there was a military-looking fellow belonging to some dragoon regiment, as I knew by his uniform, in which, like all Frenchmen, he thought fit to travel. He had hitherto been rather a quiet looker-on without taking any prominent part in the shindy; but upon being thus invoked, he deliberately came round from his place at the further end of the table, walked close up to me, all the while twirling his long moustaches, and making a sort of half-salute, thus delivered himself slowly and very

distinctly: "Messieurs, upon the part of my uncle, M. le Viscomte de Tison (that was the old gentleman's name) I have the honour to record his opinion that you are liars, and, like all your countrymen, poltroons and boasting cowards; and also upon my own part," he added, changing his language into very tolerable English, "I pronounce you to be no more nor less than what one would call, in your own tongue, three all-the-fact British snobses."

I had remained standing to receive him, and when he had thus finished his little compliment, without vouchsafing one single word in reply, before he knew what I was at, I had the hero fast by the lobe of his ear, and just marching him down to the end of the room, passed him out into the hall by a very gentle application of my toe, and quietly shut the door upon him.

It was by no means a hard or malicious kick which I administered, but rather a courteous and formal kick of ceremony, if I may so describe it. "Now," I said, turning to the remaining company, "if there is any other gentleman present who cares to come within reach of my fist, and repeat the sentiment of M. le viscomte, or M. le capitaine his nephew, I give him notice that I shall not trouble myself to treat him with the same tender consideration, but simply

knock him down at once." Then, after a pause, during which nobody seemed willing to embrace the opportunity thus offered, De Lyons and I made each a low bow to the whole party, who sat staring at us in solemn silence, and wishing them collectively a very good evening, requested to be accommodated with a private room, where the *maitre d'hotel,* who after the scene I have been describing seemed inclined to treat us with more respect, sent us up our supper which we had been refused below, and to which we were by that time fully prepared, even under the circumstances, to do full justice.

CHAPTER XXVII.

PRELIMINARY ARRANGEMENTS.

SIR L. O'TRIGGER: "'There's nothing like being used to a thing.' —*The Rivals.*

"OF course you will have to fight him," said De Lyons; "and the worst of it is, though I know you could not help yourself, by treating the fellow as you did, it is now for our side to offer satisfaction, and thus leave the choice of weapons, time, place, and every other advantage to the adversary. I wonder who he will fix upon as his friend to arrange matters?—that sarcastic old rhinoceros of an uncle of his, I shouldn't wonder, who originated the row and forced this quarrel upon us.

"But while I am thus talking, my dear fellow, I forget that I must be off and find out what has become of the captain, and to whom he will refer us as his second. It never does, you know, to put oneself in the wrong on these occasions, I mean in regard to matters of strict etiquette, and particularly after the insulting remarks that old buffer made in regard to the views of Englishmen in general upon duelling."

I could perceive that, in spite of himself, the German-student blood of my friend *Taraxacum* was warming up; and I do not really think that I do him much injustice, when I say, that he evidently quite enjoyed the serious scrape in which we found ourselves entangled, though by no fault or intention of our own.

A serious scrape indeed I felt it to be when left to my own reflections.

I cannot describe to you the bitterness and utter helplessness of my feelings when I began to look the facts of the last few hours in the face; I was not conscious of any feeling of fear exactly, and I do not think that I am boasting, when I say, that at that time I did not feel a bit more nervous than I should if I had been going to start in a steeple-chase, or row in a boat-race, against any well-matched rivals.

I had not to reproach myself for my own conduct in this matter, for I felt that I had been left no possible alternative for acting otherwise than I had done; but when I pictured to myself the state of danger in which my poor father was lying in a strange place, probably at the mercy of complete strangers, who, for all I knew, might be not even pretending to pay him either common care or attention, anxiously expecting and fretting himself at the non-arrival of either my mother or myself, who, if the letter had not been

delayed, ought and might have been with him long before this time ; when I thought of all this, and that perhaps even an hour might make all the difference between my arriving in time to cheer and console him, or finding that I was too late, I did indeed feel miserable and wretched in the extreme.

Here, at Lyons, must I now remain, certainly for the next day, instead of pushing on as I had intended by four o'clock in the morning, with the pleasing alternative of being either left myself,—dead, or seriously wounded—where no one would know what had become of me; or even should the other event happen, and I were to kill my antagonist—a man whose very existence had been unknown to me two hours since—I might have to fly from justice, with all the probable chances of being caught, subjected to a criminal trial, and perhaps a long imprisonment, if no worse; and all this for no fault or folly of my own, but entirely in consequence of the disgusting tricks of the creature who, of all others upon earth, I most dreaded and detested.

A thick cloud of despair seemed to come over me, even harder than ever to be borne, as I reflected upon the destinies of my life in this instance again thus unaccountably affected and overshadowed by the ever pernicious influence of that little fiend Melchior Gorles.

"All right!" cried De Lyons, bursting into the room in a high state of delight, with a couple of small swords wrapped up in a cloak, and tucked under his arm. "I was only just in time to meet Captain Tison's friend coming up to look after us—a most gentlemanly fellow and quite up to his business; not the ancient rhinosceros, I am glad to say, for I know we should have had no end of a bother with him. But the *Capitaine*, when he left the room, as you so delicately expressed it, very wisely went straight off to the barracks close by, and engaged the friendly services of the Major of the regiment which is quartered here. I will say that for them, French officers are always the readiest and most obliging fellows in these matters in the world. Nothing could be more gentlemanly and accommodating in every way than the Major—a fine soldierly-looking fellow, though just now with his right arm in a sling, hurt by a fall from his horse, he tells me. I have been round with him to his quarters to borrow this pair of ticklers, which he kindly allowed me to choose from a lot of beauties he has there, a regular choice collection which quite made my mouth water to look at. And there is, he says, a quiet and convenient place where we can have it out, without a chance of being disturbed, as soon as it is light enough in the morning; and the surgeon of the

regiment, a stout little fellow who, the major tells me, can sing a first-rate song, is to be there; and, in short, we have arranged it all as jollily and comfortable as possible."

"It is wonderful how differently the principals and seconds are apt to see things in regard to their comfort and jollity," I remarked, rather angrily; for in the gloomy state of mind, in which my half-hour's solitary reflections had left me, I was feeling rather disgusted at De Lyons' exuberant high spirits and levity; to tell the truth, I am afraid that I rather imputed them to the intense appreciation of his own cleverness, in having, by his extra zeal as second, managed to have shifted the whole honour of the principal's part upon my shoulders; but I wronged him, and I only hope that he did not discover my unworthy suspicion of him, but really misunderstood my meaning, as he seemed to do.

"Why, my dear fellow," he replied, "there is no use being dismal that I see, and as to principals or seconds, it seems to me just as broad as it is long—we shall only be serving each other turn about. You lead off the game with the Captain, and I stand by as your second. When you have polished him off, as you must do your best to do, then you will act as my second with my man."

"Your man?" I said. "Who are you going to fight with then? The Major?"

"The Major, no; he has lost the use of his arm, I tell you; but he has promised to bring a friend with him, the most slashing *sous-lieutenant* in his regiment, he says. The fact is, that as the quarrel can scarcely be said to be his own, though you made it rather more personal, by-the-bye, it occurred to me as rather hard upon the Captain to have to fight twice over on the same question, when another fellow could answer the purpose quite as well; besides, if you pink him, I should be left without any satisfaction, and he called me a liar and an 'all-the-fact snob,' just as much as he did you, and I must have my change out of that insult from somebody. So I put the case exactly as it stands to the major as we were going along together, who agreed at once that the easiest way to solve the difficulty will be to bring with him the subaltern, as I tell you.

"He need not be required to use the same offensive words, but it will be sufficient if he merely states 'that he feels sure that the Captain said no more than he was justified in saying.' He need not even know what that was. But you must be my second when your own affair is disposed of, or if you unfortunately get prodded through, then the Major will

be at leisure, and has most kindly volunteered to act for me."

"Why are we not to fight with pistols?" I inquired.

"Well, the only little difficulty that at all arose in arranging matters, was as to which side had the choice of weapons, and as they were strong for swords, and I remembered how handy you used to be with the foils in the fencing-school at Dresden, and at the same time thought of the difference between your great six-feet odd carcase, or shall I say, portly form, and the Frenchman's thread-paper figure, I gave in, particularly when the major offered to lend me that pair of beauties. Just try them only. Look here, it wouldn't be a bad idea to fix half this claret cork on the point of each of them and have a ten minutes practice. There is an artful dodge in engaging in tierce with an under turn of the wrist, which I can teach you in five minutes. I learnt it from a crafty old Pole last year, and I have never yet seen a Frenchman whom it did not puzzle. Do you see? one—two—there—yes, that is it; now try it again. Once more. Bravo! now don't forget it, you may find it useful to-morrow. The French, as a nation, are undoubtedly the finest fencers and best swordsmen in the world, as long as they are pitted against those who have been

taught in the same school, and exactly the same style as themselves; but if they happen to be encountered by an irregular assault, or any fancy dodge, I have over and over again seen them done in no time. I have seen too much of this fun at Leipsic and Heidelberg to think much of it. Fancy you are standing up against old Sprittz, the fencing master, the only difference is, that you must remember that there are no buttons on the foils on this occasion, and that unless you do your best to stick the Captain, you may take your oath that he will stick you if he can. Come, let us get to bed; we must be on the spot by seven, though that seems a reprieve from half-past three, which is the hour at which we should have had to have turned out, to have been in time, if, as we intended, we could have gone on by the first boat up the river for Châlons."

Expecting thus to have had to turn up early, we had on our arrival agreed to take a double-bedded room, in order that we might thus have a better chance of waking each other, and so have been more sure of being off in time.

Going up to the bed, on to which, when we had chosen the room, I had chucked my rugs and travelling-bag, by way of settling which I should prefer, lo and behold! there, tumbling in the midst of my

things, lay Gorles, fast asleep, with all his clothes on, in a topsy-turvy position, that is, not only with his face downwards, but with his head towards the foot of the bed, and his boots—actually his filthy boots! which he must have even taken the trouble to put on, preparatory to thus turning-in for the night, upon the identical clean pillow, on which I had been intending to rest my own weary head.

I was already so thoroughly dead beaten, and over-tired by the journey, to say nothing of the disgust and confusion of feelings which were the result of the evening's adventure and its consequences, that when I thus again unexpectedly came upon the little brute, the origin of all the troubles which I had already been through, besides what were yet in store for me, I could not find words to utter. I felt that I did not dare trust myself to remain even in the room; but hastily gathering my things together, followed the *garçon*, who was in attendance, on to another small room on a higher story, and there, tumbling out of my clothes and into the very small crib of a bed in less than no time, buried my head in the blankets, with a hope of getting to sleep as soon as possible, not only with a view to the early work that was cut out for me in the morning, but also to shut out, though maybe only for a few hours, the con-

fusion of disgust, anxiety, and dark forebodings with which my mind was filled and overwhelmed. Before, however, I had succeeded in thus giving myself the slip, *Taraxacum* came in to look after me, and impress a last warning against being too late for our engagement in the morning. He was still as full of his high spirits and tricks as if he were a schoolboy going home next day for his holidays, instead of having to take part in a mortal duel with the most slashing subaltern, as he had himself described his proposed antagonist, in a French dragoon regiment.

"Did you hear that little beggar Gorles holloaing?" he inquired. "I first woke him up by setting fire to his hair, and then when he turned round, shoved the end of the lighted candle into his mouth; and then didn't he just begin to splutter, and kick up no end of a row! I asked him what the deuce he meant by appropriating your bed, and sleeping on it as he was, in his clothes and boots, too? He replied that he turned-in to the first empty room he came to, and hadn't thought it worth while to undress, as we should have to start again by the river-boat so early in the morning. Then I just about pitched into him well for his conduct in the supper-room, at which at first he appeared inclined to grin, and consider as rather funny than not; but when I went on to enlighten our

interesting young friend as to the sequel, and maybe, serious consequences of his funny games, he began to look rather queer; not only surprised, but to give the little beggar his due, sorry and annoyed. I do not really believe that he was humbugging, when, upon my pointing out to him the awful inconvenience and anxiety which this unlooked-for delay must be to you, without reckoning the odds that may turn up, unfortunately, to keep you altogether from the bedside of your father, to reach whom, as he well knew, you had been counting the very hours which must intervene;—I don't believe that it was all humbug, I say, when he declared that he would not for worlds have caused you this annoyance, and that he would gladly do anything in his power to get you out of this scrape, and allow you to go on at once, as you intended, to Paris, or wherever it is you want to be.

Indeed he even proposed to go at once and knock up the Captain, and either take the challenge on himself or offer any apology, however humble, for his conduct, and thus settle the matter. But I knew that you of course would not consent to that; it would look like shuffling out of the affair in a way which would give that old cockatoo of a *Vicomte* something really to crow about. And as to Gorles apologizing, though it was his folly which brought us into the

row, it was not actually for his sake, but our own personal honour and that of our nation, which was insulted, you know. Oh no, it would never do to let Gorles put his foot in it; so I plainly told him, that nothing he could possibly do, could help matters. He put on a very mysterious and important look, and said he was not quite so sure of that matter; and as he insisted upon knowing the number of the Captain's room, and he went on bothering, I at last told him No. 56, which, as it happens, is where the old uncle, M. le Vicomte, roosts. It will be such a stunning sell for him, and at the same time partly pay out the old rhinosceros for his iniquities, to be roused up out of his best sleep at some unconscionable hour in the morning, by little Gorles looming in upon him, to offer an explanation of the circumstances in that villanous French of his: I would give a trifle to witness the scene, and hear the row that is sure to ensue between them——

"Well, then, good night, and mind that we must be stirring by not one minute later than half-past six to-morrow morning."

END OF VOL. II.

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